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PROTECTING OUR OWN: FIRE SUPPORT IN URBAN LIMITED WARFARE

BY

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ABSTRACT

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The use of fire support in the urban environment during the conduct of Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) and limited warfare is made more difficult by the divergent interests of force protection and the requirements to limit collateral damage and non-combatant casualties. The concept of the "Three-Block War" and the urban battlefield is examined, as is the applicability of the Laws of War. Two historical vignettes are discussed, involving fire support related incidents from the Israeli "Operation Grapes of Wrath" and the U.S. operations in Somalia. Future developments are discussed and conclusions are given.

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PREFACE

I began thinking about the subject of this paper when working in a training cadre, teaching Marines the finer points of special operations prior to their overseas deployments. One of my specific responsibilities was to instruct in the application of supporting arms, particularly indirect fire weapons such as artillery, naval gunfire, and mortars as well as close air support from fixed-wing aircraft and attack helicopters. The existing course did not spend much time on the incidental or unintended damage that we might cause during the application of this firepower. In the process of adding this subject to the training syllabus, I began thinking in a more general way about the application of this kind of power on the battlefield of the future, and what difficulties it might hold.

I thought back to two incidents during the Gulf War where I served as an attack helicopter pilot in support of the Marine Corps Task Forces pushing north to liberate Kuwait. The first came during the start of the air war while I was operating out of Saudi Arabia. We had just finished our first mission of the war where we had engaged and destroyed an Iraqi outpost that had pinned down a reconnaissance team on the border north of Khafji. We were handed off to an airborne forward air controller (FAC) in an OV-10 who had sighted a truck pulling into a garage in a small coastal village farther north in Kuwait and was ready to control my section in attacking this target. Upon questioning him, I determined that it was not a military vehicle (not necessarily disqualifying it as a target since the Iraqis were operating a wide range of civilian vehicles in the area at the time) and that there was not any obvious military nature to the building. I did not know much about the Laws of War at the time, but it seemed to me that unless we were pretty certain that the house was full of Iraqis soldiers we probably should not attack it. The possibility of knocking down a house full of Kuwaitis civilians who had just popped out to the corner store for a few essentials did not square in my mind with our overall mission of liberating Kuwait. I passed on the mission, but spent more time than was healthy questioning if I had done the right thing.

The second incident occurred while pushing into Southern Kuwait with the First Marine Division. A ground FAC with a tank unit had located an Iraqi observation post and wanted me to engage it with a Hellfire missile. We ran through the normal coordination for the mission, but when I released the missile it either malfunctioned, or more likely homed in on the underspill from

the controller's targeting laser, and landed a few meters in front of FAC's tank. I was sickened at having come so close to killing some of my fellow Marines (the FAC seemed to take it in stride however). I had never seriously given much thought to the possibility of killing someone I really did not intend to (a mark of my inexperience) and it was with some trepidation that I released a second missile, which did the intended job.

These incidents had a marked effect on me (particularly the second), and are fresh in my mind several years after the fact.

With the Marine Corps' current focus on urban operations in general and limited war, as well as military operations other than war (MOOTW), I once again began thinking about how we can use the firepower that fire support brings to the battlefield. I have set the scope of this paper on the lower end of the combat intensity spectrum, not because collateral damage and non-combatant casualties are not a concern in general war, but because the likelihood of our encountering non-combatants on the battlefield is significantly greater in limited war and MOOTW.

Rather than repeat "limited war and MOOTW" over and over through this paper, I have settled on merely saying "limited war" to mean all combat operations short of a general war. This is a much looser definition than will be found in Joint Publication 1-02 (Dictionary of Military and Related terms), but I hope the reader will not object.

PROTECTING OUR OWN: FIRE SUPPORT IN URBAN LIMITED WARFARE

> *We didn't kill them with prior intent. We killed them because the yawning gap between the unlimited sacrosanct importance which we attribute to our own lives and the very limited sacred character we attribute to the lives of others allowed us to kill them.*
>
> — Arieh Shavit[1]

As warfighters, members of the United States military services take it as an article of faith that their country will use all the means in its power to protect them. They know that the lives of a country's service members are its most precious commodity and that their service will spare no effort to prevent their unnecessary death, to rescue them if isolated, and even recover their body if killed. This is the sacred, unspoken pact between the service and the warrior; *We will not forsake you, we will not abandon you, if you die we will bring your body back to your family.*

These precepts are deeply instilled in all our services, but in particular our ground combat forces. Men will not fight well or for long without this faith in their comrades and service. The capability and will to protect our people must be absolute.

As I will show, this *sine qua non* of combat is often in conflict with the tenets of "Just War" theory, particularly these:[2]

- That certain parts of the population, especially noncombatants, be immune from intentional attack.
- That the damage likely to be incurred by the war may not be disproportionate to the injury suffered.
- That only legitimate and moral means may be employed in prosecuting war.

This ethical tension, the basic conflict between a warfighter's duty to his comrades and his duty as a member of a professional military is nowhere more evident than in limited urban combat. The confluence of a hostile force embedded within a larger mass of unarmed civilians, and the incredible destructive power of the modern military makes for hard choices over who lives and who dies. And, as we shall see, the likelihood of U.S. forces participating in urban military operations of this kind is increasing.

THE THREE BLOCK WAR

> *When Marines deploy into urban areas today and in the future, they will need the flexibility to address a wide variety of crises. In one city block, a Marine will provide food, care, and comfort for an emaciated child. In the next block, you will see this Marine with outstretched arms, separating two warring tribes. Then, in a third city block, this same Marine will engage in intense house-to-house fighting with hostile forces.*
>
> — Gen. C. C. Krulak[3]

The "Three Block War" is a construct used in the Marine Corps to focus attention on the problems of future (and some would say present) urban operations. The basic concepts are:

- That an increase of urbanization and concurrent shift in world demographics to city dwelling will occur with over 60% of the world's population living in cities by 2025.[4]
- That these cities will be prone to instability and conflict due to overcrowding, food and water shortages, under/unemployment, crime, and infrastructure deficiencies caused by uncontrolled growth.[5]
- That U.S. military forces shall continue to deploy to these urban centers to conduct Operations Other Than War (OOTW), such as peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and humanitarian relief missions. They may also be called upon to conduct general and limited war in the urban environment.[6]

A key feature of these operations will be the necessity to operate "light" but be able to fight "heavy". Politically and practically, U.S. forces will not be able to conduct the humanitarian piece of the "Three Block War" from the inside of a tank or bunker. U.S. forces will be intermingled with the local populace, normally with only their personal weapons available for defense. Nevertheless, when operations shift to combat, they

must be able to ensure the survivability of their force, and by extension, their mission. Accurate, responsive urban fires will provide this capability; indeed, this firepower may often prove to be the only thing that can.

During the Cold War, both U.S. and Soviet doctrine preached avoidance of urban conflict. Experience showed that urban centers were to be isolated and bypassed whenever possible. But recent U.S. and Russian experiences have lain to rest the idea that we can avoid urban operations. The unhappy truth is that the overwhelming trend is towards more military involvement in urban settings, not less. The increasing chaos in these future megacities will yield trouble that only a large, well-organized military force can overcome. The U.S. military may be ordered to a city to restore order, rebuild infrastructure, provide medical care, or hand out food and supplies; but it will be ordered there with greater and greater frequency. Moreover, all too often, once there, it will find it necessary to fight.

THE URBAN BATTLEFIELD

> *Urban warfare is regarded as an exception, an occasional and unhappy accident, far away from the mainstream. War, when properly conducted, according to human superstition, belongs in civilisationless open countryside.*
>
> — S.L.A. Marshall[7]

The urban battlefield may be thought of as being made up of two main parts. The first is the city's inanimate physical structure; the terrain, road network, buildings, districts of various use, and supporting infrastructure such as the water distribution network, power lines, and sewage system. But a city also has a corporal being that it derives from its inhabitants. Much as some terrain is harder to fight on than others, different populations will cause different challenges in urban combat.

The physical terrain that military forces must consider in urban combat varies immensely. The large megacities in which it may find itself may have one or more business or manufacturing centers with an orderly street layout and large, multistory buildings. Ringing these city centers however, will be an ever-expanding mass of residential neighborhoods and slums, some of which will be haphazardly laid out in an undocumented and bewildering maze. Construction of buildings will vary from reinforced concrete, glass, metal, and masonry high-rises, to cardboard and tin shacks. The slums will be the areas of focus for humanitarian efforts and counterinsurgency operations, though military operations will take place throughout the dizzying three-dimensional area of urban sprawl, from subterranean tunnels and sewer lines, to the tops of the highest skyscrapers.[8]

The population will be increasingly young, under-educated, under-employed, hungry and dissatisfied. Within their mass will move well-armed criminals, gangs, and insurgents. There may or may not be an operating government with a police force or military. There may be organized militia factions or clans, seeking to establish control over part or all of the city or country.

Operating in the same area, but often with different agendas and varying desires for cooperation, will be an array of international relief organizations. Private Voluntary Organizations (PVO's), Non-Governmental Organization's (NGO's), and foreign governmental entities will simultaneously request assistance from U.S. military forces and seek to maintain a non-aligned and independent nature. They will certainly not willingly provide intelligence information in support of any combat operations, nor will they necessarily observe military restrictions on their movements.[9] Through the very nature of their mission, "to provide humanitarian assistance wherever it is needed" regardless of political or religious affiliation,[10] the military will find these workers in the slums and residential centers that threaten to become the focal point for armed conflict. They may even be found providing direct humanitarian assistance to armed groups in conflict with U.S.

military forces. Separating their activities from military combat operations will be extremely difficult.

Finally, the independent media will be found in full force on the urban battlefield, as will the information warriors of our future opponents. The ability to independently record and broadcast in real-time, worldwide, every instance of collateral damage or non-combatant or friendly casualty from the remotest area, gives great advantage to any future belligerent. The ability to erode popular support at home or mission legitimacy throughout the world will be a potent weapon.[11]

URBAN FIRE SUPPORT, ROE, AND NON-COMBATANT CASUALTIES

> *No one likes CNN to show civilians wounded or killed in urban combat, but I would rather see that than see American soldiers/Marines being dragged through the streets.*
>
> — Captain, U.S. Marine Corps[12]

Fire support brings great destructive power to the battlefield. Area weapons, such as artillery or unguided aviation delivered ordinance, are casualty producers by design, and can rapidly reduce an urban target to ruin. Even precision guided munitions of great accuracy can produce undesired collateral damage and casualties.[13]

U.S. military doctrine recognizes this problem. The following extracts are typical:

> Urban operations … create difficult moral dilemmas due to the proximity of large numbers of civilians. Commanders must enforce discipline in their operations to minimize unnecessary collateral damage and civilian casualties.
>
> — Operations, FM 100-5[14]

> The probability is great that United States Forces will become engaged by enemy forces who are intermingled with the civilian population.
>
> The presence of civilians and the desire to limit collateral damage can restrict the use of fires and reduce firepower available to the commander.
>
> — An Infantryman's Guide to Combat in Built-up Areas, FM 90-10-1[15]

U.S. rules of engagement provide guidance to the commander in these situations as shown in this extract from the Joint Chiefs of Staff Standing Rules of Engagement (SROE).

> **Inherent Right of Self-Defense.** A commander has the authority and obligation to use all necessary means available and to take all appropriate action to defend that commander's unit and other U.S. forces in the vicinity from a hostile act or demonstrated hostile intent. Neither these rules nor the supplemental measures activated to augment these rules limit this inherent right and obligation. At all times, however, the requirements of necessity and proportionality as amplified in these SROE will be the basis for the judgment of the commander as to what constitutes an appropriate response to a particular hostile act or demonstration of hostile intent.
>
> — Joint Chiefs of Staff Standing Rules of Engagement[16]

The intent of this passage is fairly clear; do what is necessary to protect your forces, but be judicious rather than

indiscriminate. The final decision is left to the commander and his opinion will, presumably, be accepted without many questions. Except of course, it is not that simple.

The prospect of non-combatants slain, intentionally or not, by the U.S. military is only slightly less disturbing to the American people than the prospect of friendly casualties. Non-combatant casualties and collateral damage are primary cause of international approbation and leads host nations to invite a military force to leave. These things are to be avoided, both from a moral and a practical view.

This desire to avoid unnecessary collateral damage and all non-combatant casualties invariably leads to investigations and recriminations when they occur. For example, at least seven instances of soldiers and Marines firing their weapons in Somalia were criminally prosecuted during the U.S. involvement there. While these prosecutions may have been warranted, and some of the accused were convicted of criminal wrongdoing, the end effect on the deployed force should be obvious. Military personnel, press, and other commentators perceived that investigation and/or prosecution would follow every shooting.[17] This had a restrictive effect on the service member's inclination to fire their weapons even when warranted, and took some time for the commanders on the ground to overcome. Similar

events and reactions were found during the U.S. intervention in Panama in 1989, and during the Vietnam conflict.[18]

Of course, it is really the mission commander on the ground who is caught between the proverbial "rock and a hard place". On one hand, he has the duty and the understandable personal desire to see that none of his subordinates come to any harm. On the other, he has the moral and command responsibility to ensure the safety of the non-combatants in his area of operations. The commander is expected to complete his mission without causing it to be curtailed due to domestic outrage over U.S. casualties or international and U.S. outrage over non-combatant casualties.

Of even greater difficulty to the commander is the use of fire support in these situations. The possibility of collateral damage and non-combatant injury is so great that ROE usually restricts approval of the use of these weapons to senior officers. In Operation Just Cause, the invasion of Panama to oust the dictator Manuel Noriega in 1989, the use of AC-130's, attack helicopters, artillery, and mortars required the approval of a battalion commander or equivalent (Lieutenant Colonel). Fixed-wing close air support required the approval of a division commander (Major General) or higher![19] ROE restrictions of this magnitude not only delay the application of this firepower, often beyond the limits of usefulness, but they plainly have the

ancillary effect of discouraging the use of these weapons systems.

URBAN FIRES AND THE LAW OF WAR

War is cruelty, and you cannot refine it.

— W. T. Sherman[20]

If it is difficult to reach clear consensus on appropriate restrictions for the use of firepower in limited urban combat among members of the U.S. military, it is almost impossible to do so among the international community. Opinions vary considerably depending on the relative importance one places on the lives of the non-combatant civilians compared to the lives of the deployed service members and one's overall involvement with the conflict.

Involving non-combatant civilians in military operations, either by specifically firing upon them or using them as shields against enemy fire is prohibited.[21] Additionally, an attacker must take all reasonable steps to minimize loss of life during attacks on military objectives.[22] Responsibility for non-combatant casualties caused through the intentional use of civilians to discourage attack has traditionally fallen on the party using the civilians as shields rather than his adversary. Incidental casualties were a "cost of war", and no one could

blame a belligerent for the deaths of non-combatants placed in harm's way by an adversary, as long as the attacker exercised ordinary care.[23] In fact, some scholars have viewed that customary law allows the attack of military targets even when a defender has "immunized" the target from attack by surrounding it with non-combatant civilians. To act otherwise would be to actually increase the likelihood that a belligerent would use this (illegal) tactic again.[24]

There is not complete agreement on this point however. The 1977 Protocol I to the 1949 Geneva Conventions sought to shift some of the responsibility from the defender to the attacker for non-combatant casualties caused by using civilians as shields from attack.[25] Specifically, it placed a prohibition against attack of civilians unless they participated directly in hostilities.[26] The United States and other countries (including Iraq) refused to ratify the treaty because of the obvious restrictions on the conduct of warfare.[27]

Protocol I also attempted to codify the principle of proportionality, and even though the U.S. did not become a signatory to the protocol, it does recognize the concept of proportionality as customary law, and observes it as such.[28]

The classic example of a disproportionate action usually given is the destruction of a village and its inhabitants to kill a single sniper.[29] But the concept becomes less clear when

the situation is reworded thus, "Is it disproportionate to fire into a large mob within which are intermingled a few belligerents who have trapped and are about to kill one of your men?" Many military officers and legal experts would say "No problem, that's the cost of waging war." However, under the conditions of Protocol I (which has been ratified by numerous countries and which is considered international law by such bodies as the International Red Cross),

> "the presence of a few isolated soldiers or guerrilla fighters among a crowd of civilians cannot justify a full-scale attack on the crowd; if there are no other means available, their elimination will have to be postponed."[30]

The basic question that we are left with is simply, "How many non-combatant civilians should a country be willing to kill to ensure the safety of its service members"? Like in so many other things, the answer depends on where you sit.

HISTORICAL VIGNETTES

With a better understanding of the issues involved in the use of fire support during military operations in limited urban combat, we turn to two historical vignettes which provide insight into the real difficulties and far-reaching consequences to be found in this environment.

The first example is from the Israeli campaign in South Lebanon known as "Operation Grapes of Wrath". The second example

is from the UN peacekeeping mission to Somalia, and specifically the U.S. conduct of a campaign to arrest the Somali clan leader Mohamed Farah Aideed.

QANA: BLOOD FLOWS WHERE CHRIST TURNED WATER INTO WINE

> *(The) civilian population constitutes our defensive belt.*
>
> — Hizballah leader, Mohammed Raad[31]

On 18 April 1996, Hizballah[32] guerrillas manned a mortar emplacement approximately 220 meters southwest of the United Nations' Interim force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) compound in the village of Qana in Lebanon, and fired on an Israeli patrol in South Lebanon. Israeli radar located the firing site and Israeli artillery initiated a counter-battery 155mm artillery mission against the Hizballah mortar team, firing approximately 17 shells that landed in and around the UNIFIL camp. The bombardment killed over 100 Lebanese refugees in the camp and wounded a greater number, including four UN peacekeepers.[33]

BACKGROUND.

The Israeli Government launched Operation Grapes of Wrath on April 11, 1996, in response to numerous Hizballah operations in South Lebanon and Northern Israel during the preceding months.[34] As part of the campaign, the Israelis conducted an Information

Warfare operation with the aim of moving the civilian population out of South Lebanon to the north. The Israelis had used the same tactic in a previous campaign, Operation Accountability, in July 1993.[35] A broadcast from April 13, 1996 is typical:

> In light of the continued terrorist actions by Hizballah, the Israeli Army will intensify its activities against the terrorists stating tomorrow, 14 April 1996. Following the warning broadcast by the Voice of the South to the inhabitants of 45 villages, any presence in these villages will be considered a terrorist one, that is, the terrorists and all those with them will be hit. Any civilian who lags behind in the aforementioned villages and towns will do so on his own responsibility and will put his life in danger.[36]

While over 400,000 Lebanese civilians fled to the north in response to the fighting, several thousand took refuge in the UNIFIL base camps throughout South Lebanon.[37]

The UNIFIL camp in Qana was manned by the headquarters unit of a Fijian Battalion. Over 800 Lebanese refugees had taken shelter in the camp, including the families of Hizballah guerillas. Hizballah used the area around the UNIFIL camp to make rocket and mortar attacks against Northern Israel and Israeli forces in Lebanon on numerous occasions.[38] On 15 April Hizballah shot and wounded a Fijian officer when he tried to prevent the guerrillas from firing rockets from a location approximately 220 meters from the camp.[39]

THE INCIDENT.

On 18 April, Hizballah fired two separate volleys of Katyusha rockets from locations around the camp. Around noon they set up a mortar and two hours later began a short mortar barrage. The target was an Israeli patrol in South Lebanon. According to Maj. Gen. Matan Vilna'i of the Israeli Army:

> The mortars began falling 100 meters from the force, then 30 to 40 meters, with shrapnel falling right beside our soldiers. We acted in a matter of minutes to extricate the unit. In that time we had to understand what was going on, to relay orders and to stop the enemy fire.[40]

At 1:52 and 1:58 PM Israeli counter-battery radar indicated two separate locations in Qana where the firing had originated. A crosscheck of the coordinates revealed their proximity to the UNIFIL camp and permission was sought and obtained from higher headquarters to engage the targets. Target coordinates were transmitted to two Israeli artillery batteries, and the missions were fired within 15 minutes of initial detection.[41]

The results were horrific. About half of the Israeli shells fired fell in the UN camp[42]. The refugees had no shelters to protect them, and the destructive power of the barrage was so great that many of the refugees were torn to pieces. No definite death count was possible because of the total dismemberment of some of the dead.[43]

THE AFTERMATH.

The repercussions from the attack were immediate and widespread. Israel was condemned by most nations, international organizations, and the media. Hizballah and their supporters charged that Israel had intentionally attacked the refugees in the camp. Criticism of the killings was widespread in Israel itself. The United Nations commissioned an investigation that concluded:

> "While the possibility cannot be ruled out completely, it is unlikely that the shelling of the United Nations compound was the result of gross technical and/or procedural errors."[44]

In some ways, the Israelis were victims of their own prior success and claims of precision. A combination of counter battery radar, remotely piloted vehicles (RPV's), and ground and air spotters had enabled previous artillery strikes to be conducted with great accuracy. The Israeli Army contended that though there was an RPV and two helicopters in the area, these assets were not positioned to adjust the artillery fire at Qana.[45] Though they released video and timelines demonstrating that there was no aerial observation of the barrage,[46] their presence and Israel's demonstrated capability were sufficient proof of intent for their critics.[47]

In the face of this tumult of criticism and accusation, Israel and the United States hurriedly negotiated a cease-fire

with Lebanese and Syrian officials representing Hizballah[48]. The successful Israeli military campaign had been halted, not by enemy resistance, but by international outrage over collateral damage and non-combatant casualties.

MOGADISHU: DISASTER, THEN RETREAT

> *Kasoobaxa guryaha oo iska celsa cadowga! (Come out and defend your homes!)*
>
> — Somali militiamen[49]

On the afternoon of 3 October 1993, a joint unit of U.S. Special Operations forces[50] and U.S. Army Rangers executed a raid in Mogadishu, Somalia, to capture several top members of Somali clan leader Mohamed Farrah Aidid's organization. The mission initially went well, however, the raid force almost immediately came under fire from Somali gunmen and the situation rapidly deteriorated. It took fifteen hours to extract the raid force at a cost of 18 U.S. dead and 73 wounded, one Malaysian soldier dead and six wounded, two Blackhawk helicopters shot down and several others damaged, and 500 to 1000 Somalis killed with over 1000 Somalis wounded. An American pilot was held captive for ten days and the mutilated bodies of U.S. servicemen were dragged through the streets of Mogadishu by jeering mobs.[51 & 52]

BACKGROUND.

The conflict in Somalia and the U.S. involvement there were rooted in a legacy of European colonialism and superpower conflict. Somalia's boundaries were based on the artificial divisions decided when the Italians, French and British divvied up the Horn of Africa in the 1880's. The Somali Republic emerged as a nation following the joining of the British and Italian administered Somalilands in 1960.[53] Under the military dictator Siad Barre and hungry for arms to contest the ill-defined border with Ethiopia, Somalia aligned with the Soviet Union. When the Soviets sided with Ethiopia in the conflict, Somalia's fortunes turned. Defeated by the Ethiopians, Siad Barre switched to the Western Bloc and alliance with the United States. After twenty-one years of rule, he was overthrown in a civil war, fleeing the country in January 1991.[54]

Humanitarian relief efforts had begun early in the civil war, spearheaded by numerous PVO's, NGO's, and UN agencies. But by the end of 1991 the problems on the ground had grown immense; 20,000 casualties, 600,000 refugees, and several hundred thousand internally displaced persons. Even more significant, the fighting had grown so bad that the relief agencies were forced to withdraw or curtail their operations.[55]

Large-scale U.S. military involvement began in 1992 in Somalia spanned three phases known by their UN designations;

United Nations Operations in Somalia (UNOSOM) I, Unified Task Force (UNITAF), and UNOSOM II. The U.S. military primarily provided airlift support in the distribution of humanitarian supplies during UNOSOM I.[56] During the UNOSOM I/UNITAF phase, the U.S. military formed the core of the UNITAF which was directed to stabilize the country and provide security support for UNOSOM I.[57] UNOSOM II replaced UNOSOM I/UNITAF with a permanent UN peacekeeping force and a mandate to continue the stabilization and rebuilding of Somalia.[58] But as trouble with clan leaders escalated, particularly with the leader of the Habr Gidr clan, Mohamed Farah Aideed, and UN casualties grew, another mission emerged for the U.S. military. A Special Forces unit was deployed to Mogadishu to hunt down Aideed, Task Force Ranger.[59]

THE INCIDENT.

The raid on 3 October 1993 in downtown Mogadishu was the turning point in U.S. involvement in Somalia. Grossly underestimating the capabilities and resolve of Aideed's militia, the raid force was quickly pinned down at the raid site by hundreds of militia fighters. Additional irregular volunteers spontaneously joined the fighting, adding firepower to Aideed's forces.[60] Compounding the problem was the downing of two Blackhawk helicopters close to the raid site. This forced Task

Force Ranger to split its forces on the ground and defend disparate locations.[61]

Fire support assets allocated for raid were two AH-6 "Little Bird" attack helicopters armed with 7.62mm mini-guns and 2.75" rockets, and MH-60 Blackhawk helicopters carrying 7.62mm door guns and airborne snipers.[62] The pilots and crews of MH-6 "Little Bird" assault helicopters also provided limited airborne small arms fire. The relief column that eventually rescued the raid force had vehicular mounted .50 caliber machine, MK-19 40mm automatic grenade launchers, and were supported by Pakistani tanks and APC's with Italian tanks available as well.[63] An OH-58 helicopter and Navy P-3 aircraft circling overhead provided airborne command and control.[64]

Official details of the 15-hour battle are difficult to obtain due to the classification of both the mission and the after action reports. But a few things are clear:

- Once the battle had begun, the task force needed large amounts of external fire support. The task force pinned down in the city were too lightly armed to extract themselves, and the reaction force sent to extricate them were too lightly armed to rapidly accomplish the rescue. Once isolated and engaged, fire support was the only way to protect the task force.

- The fire support allocated to the mission was insufficient. In retrospect, the mission required support capable of clearing the numerous roadblocks thrown up by the Somali militia and suppressing the fire from the belligerents that had the raid force pinned down. Commanders in Somalia requested these assets, including tanks, the week prior to the Task Force Ranger raid but were denied.[65] A Senate Arms Services Committee report indicates that General Downing of USSOCOM had requested AC-130 gunships, and the request was denied by General Powell, the Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. General Powell testified that when the warplanes had been used earlier in the conflict, "They wrecked a few buildings and it was not the greatest imagery on CNN."[66]
- The raid force did not make use of all of the fire support assets available to them. The 10th Mountain Division had several AH-1F attack helicopters in Somalia which had been used numerous times to provide fire support to UN peacekeeping troops.[67] Though significantly more capable than the AH-6, they were not used during the fight to rescue the raid force. Additionally, direct fire assets which were eventually integrated into the rescue force, Italian and Pakistani tanks and APC's, were not included

in the planning and preparation for the mission, delaying their use.

- As the firefight continued, observation of ROE broke down. Though troubling, numerous members of the raid force and the rescue columns that relieved them have stated in newspaper interviews that they "fired on crowds and eventually at anyone and anything they saw."[68] Both the raid force members and fire support helicopters fired on intermingled crowds of gunmen and unarmed civilians.[69] During the withdrawal, "AH-6 gunships raked the cross streets with fire to support the movement."[70]
- Finally, there does not appear to have been any more of a fire support plan than the Standard Operating Procedures for the participating unit. Once the raid force was trapped on the objective, the mission commander had to make it up on the fly.

THE AFTERMATH.

The inability of the task force to protect themselves and for the reaction force to quickly rescue them exacted a heavy price. Once the realization of what had happened settled in back in Washington, there were almost immediate calls for a pullout of all U.S. forces in Somalia.[71] President Clinton rebuffed these recommendations, but announced a change in direction for the

mission. The three primary points were that reinforcements would be sent in to protect our forces, regional African leaders would be encouraged to work with the Somalis for a lasting peace, and all U.S. forces would be pulled out by 31 March 1994.[72] Reinforcements were sent to Somalia to bolster the Quick Reaction force including the vehicles and fire support assets which had been requested before the raid.[73] Almost all U.S. forces were withdrawn by March, with a few remaining until September.[74] With the U.S. gone and the clan leaders emboldened by their success, the UNOSOM mission eventually failed altogether, and the U.S. assisted in the UN pullout with the last UN forces coming off the beach in Mogadishu on 2 March 1995.

There was widespread outrage over the deaths of the U.S. troops in America. What received little attention were the questions raised in international circles concerning the large number of Somali dead. Africans have described it as a "heartless massacre of defenseless Third World citizens by the U.S. military forces"[75] and "the massacre of Somali civilians in Mogadishu that derailed a UN humanitarian mission."[76]

Perhaps the true toll of the failure of this single mission in Somalia can best be seen in this excerpt from an article co-authored by Mr. Walter Clarke, Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy, Somalia, during Operation Restore Hope.

> The Clinton administration's refusal to respond to the genocide in Rwanda that began in April 1994 was due in part to its retreat from Somalia, announced after the deaths of 18 U.S. Army Rangers on October 3-4, 1993. In Bosnia, UN peacekeepers under fire from or taken prisoner by Serb forces over the last two years were expected to turn the other cheek for fear of "crossing the Mogadishu line." This expression, reportedly coined by Lieutenant General Sir Michael Rose, former commander of the United Nations Protection Force in Bosnia (UNPROFOR), describes the need to maintain neutrality in the face of all provocation for fear of becoming an unwilling participant in a civil war. In recent months, the design of the UN Implementation Force in Bosnia has been shaped by what was purportedly learned in Somalia. The doctrines of both the United States and the United Nations were also clearly affected. President Clinton issued a policy directive in April 1994, shortly after U.S. forces left Somalia, that implied a sharp curtailment of American involvement in future armed humanitarian interventions and that marked a retreat from his administration's earlier rhetoric of assertive multilateralism. Similarly, in the 1995 (second) edition of An Agenda for Peace, the fundamental policy document on UN peacekeeping, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali expressed less optimism about the possibilities for intervention than he did in the 1992 (first) edition, largely because of the United Nations' searing experience in Somalia. Continuing efforts by congressmen to cut or restrict U.S. contributions to UN peacekeeping are also a direct response to the perceived failures in Somalia.[77]

Having examined these two historical examples, what can one conclude about them? In one, non-combatant casualties ended an entire military campaign. In the other, a failure to plan for and provide effective fire support resulted in unacceptable friendly casualties which eventually caused an entire UN peacekeeping mission to fail. Both incidents had immediate and long-term effects on future operations for the nations involved.

Additionally, the U.S. misadventure in Somalia cast a shadow on future UN missions as well. But together these incidents also show the two sides of the urban firepower paradigm. In the future, the military will absolutely require the decisive power that fire support brings to the urban environment, but it will have to be applied appropriately and effectively. If the U.S. does not develop this capability, it risks more than a few dead soldiers or civilians. It risks the ability to project power to the very places where it will surely need to go.

THE FUTURE

> *Men who take up arms against one another do not cease on this account to be moral beings, responsible to one another and to God.*
>
> — U.S. Army General Order No. 100, 1863[78]

The Department of Defense has begun wide ranging initiatives to improve the U.S. armed forces' ability to use fire support in an urban setting. These efforts revolve around technological answers to the complexities posed by the urban environment, and doctrinal investigations to determine the best methods of employment. To list all the advances planned or being planned would be to grossly exceed the scope of this paper, but the following two categories apply:

WEAPONS EFFECTIVNESS.

- Improved accuracy weapons with variable penetration and explosive characteristics and switchable warhead yields.[79]
- Non-lethal weapons that are deliverable from aircraft and ground based fire support systems.[80]
- Unmanned remote controlled fire support systems that can operate from areas that would not be supportable with a manned system.[81]
- New technology direct fire weapons that provide protection to the user and effective line-of-sight fire support.[82]
- Improved survivability for airborne delivery platforms enhancing the ability to loiter in the target area for better response times and weapons accuracy.[83]
- Loitering weapons that can be launched to an aerial holding area where they wait for a target location to attack.[84]
- War fighting experiments designed to provide insight into fire support employment in future urban operations, such as the Marine Corps' "Urban Warrior" and urban close air support projects.

COMMAND AND CONTROL.

- Target and unit location systems that provide increased accuracy for fire support weapons, reflect up to date information on battlefield changes due to combat effects, and provide situational awareness in three dimensions.[85]
- Improved communications devices for fire support control and coordination that have greater effectiveness and reliability in built-up areas.[86]
- Unmanned aerial and ground vehicles with real-time datalink capabilities to enhance target location, acquisition and fire support mission execution.[87 & 88]
- Improved identification systems able to rapidly discriminate between friendly and enemy units, and possibly combatants and non-combatants.[89]

CONCLUSIONS.

Technology improvements and doctrinal updates are only part of the answer. We must enhance our force structure and training to maximize our ability to operate in the urban environment. We must educate or military and political leaders on the costs and hazards of these operations, so that sound decisions on intervention can be made and so that they and our country will be ready for the brutal reality of future urban warfare. And finally, we must as a nation, and as members of the

international community, develop the persistence and courage to carry out these operations without forsaking our servicemen and women, or our humanity.

Word count: 5872

ENDNOTES

[1] Arieh Shavit, *Ha'aretz* (Tel Aviv), 12 May 1996, quoted in Thomas L. Friedman, "Lebanon's Aftermath," *New York Times*, 15 May 1996, A21. Mr. Shavit was writing concerning the Israeli Defense Force artillery barrage that killed numerous civilians in a UN camp in Qana, Lebanon. The event is discussed later in this paper.

[2] John Brinsfield, "From Plato to NATO; the Ethics of Warfare; Reflections on the Just War Theory," *Military Chaplain's Review* (Spring 1991): 31.

[3] U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Marine Corps, *A Concept for Future Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain*, Marine Corps Combat Development Command Concept Paper (Quantico, Va., 1997), 6, available from < http://www.concepts. quantico.usmc.mil>; Internet; accessed 28 Jan 1999.

[4] James A. Laswell, "Wall to Wall," *Armed Forces Journal International*, Jan 1998, 37.

[5] U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Marine Corps, *The Urban Century: Developing World Urban Trends and Possible Factors Affecting Military Operations* (Nov 1997), by Matt Van Konynenburg, Defense Intelligence Reference Document, MCIA-1586-003-98 (Quantico, Va., 1997), 1-2.

[6] Laswell, 37.

[7] Michael Dewar, ed., *An Anthology of Military Quotations* (London: Robert Hale Limited, 1990), 54.

[8] U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Marine Corps, *The Urban Century: Developing World Urban Trends and Possible Factors Affecting Military Operations* (Nov 1997), 3.

[9] International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), *The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations in Disaster Relief*, Geneva, available as Appendix B to Lisa Davidson, Margaret Hayes, and James Landon, *Humanitarian and Peace Operations: NGO and the Military in the Interagency Process* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, Institute for National Strategic Studies Press Book, 1996), available from <http://www.ndu.edu/

ndu/inss/books/ngopvo/ index.html>; Internet; accessed 30 Jan 1999.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Scott E. Packard, "Bottom Line: It's Infantry," *Proceedings*, Nov 1998, 29.

[12] Patrick J. Carroll, Letter to the editor concerning the article "Exerting U.S. Influence," *Marine Corps Gazette*, Jan 1998, 9.

[13] Danielle L. Gilmore, *Precision Guided Munitions and the Law of War* (Fairbairn, Australia: Air Power Studies Centre, 1995), 2.

[14] U.S. Department of Defense, Department of the Army, *Operations*, U.S. Army Field Manual 100-5 (Washington, D.C., 1993), 14-4.

[15] U.S. Department of Defense, Department of the Army, *An Infantryman's Guide to Combat in Built-up Areas*, U.S. Army Field Manual 90-10-1 w/ change 1 (Washington, D.C., 1995), vii & G-5. The updates incorporated in change 1 to the basic manual were directed towards the problems of constrained or restrictive MOUT, specifically issues concerning restriction of collateral damage and non-combatant casualties.

[16] U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Chiefs of Staff Standing Rules of Engagement* (Washington, D.C.), available from <http://call.army.mil:80/call/newsltrs/ 96_6/roeappa2.htm>; Internet; accessed 26 Jan 1999.

[17] Mark S. Martins, "Rules of Engagement for Land Forces: A Matter of Training, Not Lawyering," *Military Law Review*, 143 (Winter 1994): 64-65.

[18] Ibid., 66.

[19] U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Marine Corps, *Aviation Combat Element Military Operations on Urban Terrain Manual*, Edition VI, MAWTS-1 Instructional Manual (Yuma, Az., 1997), B-29.

[20] Robert D. Heinl Jr., ed., *Dictionary of Military and Naval Quotations* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1966), 152. From a letter to the mayor of Atlanta, 12 Sep 1864.

[21] U.S. Department of Defense, Department of the Army, *The Law of Land Warfare*, U.S. Army Field Manual 27-10 w/ change 1 (Washington, D.C., 1976), 4-5 of change 1, 106 of basic manual.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Gilmore, 6.

[24] Ibid., 8-9.

[25] Ibid., 5-6.

[26] International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), *Handbook on the Law of War for Armed Forces*, by Frederic de Mulinen (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, 1987), 48.

[27] Gilmore, 6.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Frits Kalshoven, *The Law of Warfare* (Geneva: Henry Dunant Institute, 1973), 66.

[31] Mohammed Raad, *al Nahar* (Beirut), quoted in "Misguided," *The New Republic*, 13 May 1996, 7.

[32] The spelling in the UN report cited is used here. More commonly anglicized in the United States as "Hezbollah".

[33] Franklin van Kaplan, *Report of the Secretary General's Military Adviser Concerning the Shelling of the UN Compound at Qana on 18 April 1996 with addendum* (New York: United Nations Secretariat, 1996), UN doc. S/1996/337, reproduced in *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25, no. 4 (Summer 1996): 142-144.

[34] Virginia N. Sherry and Yifat Susskind, *Operation Grapes of Wrath: The Civilian Victims* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1997), 11.

[35] The stated Israeli goal for this forced exodus was to protect civilians from military action. The cited Human Rights Watch report contends that the goal was to exert pressure on the Lebanese government to disarm guerrilla forces in the south, particularly Hizballah. Sherry, 4-5.

[36] Sherry, 5.

[37] Richard Z. Chesnoff, "A Mideast Cry for Help," with the collaboration of Jennifer Griffin, David Makosvky, and Kenneth T. Walsh, *U.S. News & World Report*, 29 Apr 1996, 41.

[38] Kaplan, 140-141.

[39] Sherry, 47. It is worthy to note that despite this attack, the UNIFIL soldiers continued to try and stop the Hizballah activities adjacent to their camp.

[40] Sherry, 35.

[41] Kaplan, 141.

[42] Ibid., 142.

[43] Bruce W. Nelan, "Qana's Chamber of Horrors," *Time*, 29 Apr 1996, 54-55.

[44] Kaplan, 143.

[45] Ibid., 144.

[46] "Israel Releases Video on Lebanon Shelling," *New York Times*, 9 May 1996, A10.

[47] Steve Macko, "Qana: Was it a Deliberate Attack?," *EmergencyNet NEWS Service Daily Report*, 25 May 1996, Vol. 2 - 146, available from <http://www.emergency.com/qana-rpt.htm>; Internet; accessed 27 Jan 1999.

[48] Tarek Al-Issawi, "Focus Shifts From Battlefield to Diplomacy Following Slaughter in Lebanon," *Associated Press*, 19 Apr 1996, available from <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/ap419a.htm>; Internet; accessed 27 Jan 1999.

[49] Mark Bowden and Peter Tobia, "Blackhawk Down," *The Philadelphia Enquirer*, reprint of the series that ran from 16 Nov to 14 Dec 1997, 27. Somali gunmen used megaphones and this rallying cry to assemble to mob that besieged the U.S. forces in this incident.

[50] Civilian reports indicate that both Army and Navy personnel from the U.S. Special Operations Command participated. Unclassified military reports do not address this point.

[51]Bowden and Tobia, "Blackhawk Down," 3. This paragraph is a synopsis of information contained in the introduction to the series.

[52] Chia Chan Sing, Letter to the editor, *Joint Force Quarterly* (Autumn/Winter 1997-98): 9. Malaysian casualty figures were extracted from this letter. Col Sing, the Defense Attache for the Malaysian Embassy in the United States, was writing to correct allegations of Malaysian foot dragging during the raid force rescue which had been printed in a previous issue of JFQ.

[53] *Encyclopedia Brittanica*, 15th ed., s.v. "Somalia."

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[55] John L. Hirsch and Robert B. Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1995), 18.

[56] Ibid., 25.

[57] Kenneth Allard, *Somalia Operations: Lessons Learned* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1995), 14.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Bowden and Tobia, "Blackhawk Down," 39.

[60] Rick Atkinson, "Night of a Thousand Casualties," *Washington Post*, 31 Jan 1994, A10.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Bowden and Tobia, "Blackhawk Down," 5.

[63] Atkinson, "Night of a Thousand Casualties," A11.

[64] Bowden and Tobia, "Blackhawk Down," 16.

[65] Bill Gertz, "Senate Report Criticizes Powell's Staff on Somalia Raid," *Washington Times*, 1 Oct 1995, available from <http://www.netnomad.com/powell.html>; Internet; accessed 1 Feb 1999.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Keith B. Richburg, "GIs Learn Perils of City Combat," *Washington Post*, 23 Jun 1993, A1.

[68] Bowden and Tobia, "Blackhawk Down," 3.

[69] Ibid., 8.

[70] Posted account of action from 160th SOAR unofficial web site, available from <http://www.nightstalkers.com/articles/tfranger.html>; Internet; accessed 1 Feb 1999.

[71] Hirsch and Oakley, 128.

[72] Ibid., 129.

[73] George Mason University, Institute of Public Policy, United Nations Peace-Keeping Operations website, *United Nations Operation in Somalia II*, available from <http://ralph.gmu.edu/cfpa/peace/unosom_ii.html>; Internet; accessed 1 Feb 1999.

[74] William J. Clinton, *Text of a Letter from the President to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate*, White House Press Release, 1 Mar 1995, available from <http://metalab.unc.edu/pub/archives/whitehouse-papers/1995/Mar/1995-03-01-president-letter-to-speaker-on-troops-in-somalia.text>; Internet; accessed 1 Feb 1999.

[75] Keidi Obi Awadu, *Sir Colin Powell: Why Is He Being Called a 'Son-Of-A-Bush'*? 18 Oct 1995, available from <http://www.africa2000.com/CNDX/cpowell.htm>; Internet; accessed 1 Feb 1999.

[76] Kevin J. Kelley, "How US Military Blunders Led To a Massacre in Mogadishu," *The East African*, 9-22 Apr 1998, available from <http://www.africaonline.co.ke/eastafrican/980409/REGIONAL/regional20604.html>; Internet; accessed 1 Feb 1999.

[77] Walter Clarke and Jeffrey Herbst, "Somalia and the Future of Human Intervention," *Foreign Affairs*, 75 (March/April 1996): 70-85.

[78] Peter G. Tsouras, ed., *Warrior's Words* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1992), 206.

[79] U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Marine Corps, *A Concept for Future Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain*, III-13.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Fred V. Reed, "City Slickers Become Targets of Future Marine Corps Operations," *Signal*, Jul 1998, 52-53.

[82] Packard, "Bottom Line: It's Infantry," 30.

[83] U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Marine Corps, *MAGTF Aviation and Operational Maneuver from the Sea*, Marine Corps Combat Development Command Concept Paper (Quantico, Va., 1999), 10, available from <http://www.concepts.quantico.usmc.mil >; Internet; accessed 28 Jan 1999.

[84] Forrest R. Lindsey, "Focus on Expeditionary Fire Support," *Marine Corps Gazette*, Jul 1998, 19.

[85] U.S. Marine Corps, *A Concept for Future Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain*, III-9.

[86] Packard, "Bottom Line: It's Infantry," 30.

[87] Lindsey, "Focus on Expeditionary Fire Support," 20.

[88] C. Mark Brinkley, "Sarge Goes Where No One Else Will," *Navy Times (USMC Edition)*, 4 Jan 1999, 27.

[89] Lindsey, "Focus on Expeditionary Fire Support," 20.

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