

Somalia - UNOSOM I

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This text was last updated effective 21 March 1997*

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UNITED NATIONS OPERATION IN SOMALIA I

MISSION BACKGROUNDER:

LOCATION: Somalia

HEADQUARTERS: Mogadishu

DURATION: April 1992 - March 1993

STRENGTH: 50 military observers, 3,500 security personnel, up to 719 logistic support personnel; there were also some 200 international civilian staff

FATALITIES: 8 (military personnel)

EXPENDITURES: \$42,931,700 net

FUNCTION: Established to monitor the cease-fire in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, and to provide protection and security for United Nations personnel, equipment and supplies at the seaports and airports in Mogadishu and escort deliveries of humanitarian supplies from there to distribution centres in the city and its immediate environs. In August 1992, UNOSOM I's mandate and strength were enlarged to enable it to protect humanitarian convoys and distribution centres throughout Somalia. In December 1992, after the situation in Somalia further deteriorated, the Security Council authorized Member States to form the Unified Task Force (UNITAF) to establish a safe environment for the delivery of humanitarian assistance. UNITAF worked in coordination with UNOSOM I to secure major population centres and ensure that humanitarian assistance was delivered and distributed

BACKGROUND TEXT

The following text is adapted from the "Blue Helmets" - A Review of United Nations Peacekeeping. The Blue Helmets is a United Nations Sales Publication issued in December 1996. Click here for [SALES AND PUBLICATIONS](#)

Crisis in Somalia

The United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM I) was set up to facilitate humanitarian aid to people trapped by civil war and famine. The mission developed into a broad attempt to help stop the conflict and reconstitute the basic institutions of a viable State. Somalia occupies a strategically important geopolitical position at the Horn of Africa. The political culture is influenced by competition among a number of clans and clan-based factions.

From November 1991, there was heavy fighting in the Somali capital of Mogadishu between armed elements allied to General Mohamed Farah Aidid, or to Mr. Ali Mohamed Mahdi, the appointed "interim President", and yet other factions. In addition to Mogadishu, there was conflict in Kismayo, and in the north-west, local leaders were pushing to create an independent "Somaliland". The country as a whole was without any form of central government. Banditry was rife.

The fighting that followed, with clans and sub-clans constituted in loose alliances without central control, took place at a time of serious drought. That combination proved disastrous for the population at large. By 1992, almost 4.5 million people, more than half the total number in the country, were threatened with starvation, severe malnutrition and related diseases. The magnitude of suffering was immense. Overall, an estimated 300,000 people, including many children, died. Some 2 million people, violently displaced from their home areas, fled either to neighbouring countries or elsewhere within Somalia. All institutions of governance and at least 60 per cent of the country's basic infrastructure disintegrated.

Security Council imposes arms embargo and calls for humanitarian assistance

Against this background, in January 1992, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 733(1992) under Chapter VII of the Charter, imposing a general and complete arms embargo on Somalia.

On 17 March 1992, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 746(1992), urging the continuation of the United Nations humanitarian work in Somalia and strongly supporting the Secretary-General's decision to dispatch a technical team. Three days later, the Secretary-General appointed a Coordinator to oversee the effective delivery of humanitarian aid to Somalia. On 27 and 28 March, agreements were signed between the rival parties in Mogadishu resulting in the deployment of United Nations observers to monitor the cease-fire of 3 March 1992. The

agreement also included deployment of United Nations security personnel to protect United Nations personnel and humanitarian assistance activities.

The Secretary-General then recommended the establishment of a United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM), comprising 50 military observers to monitor the cease-fire, and a 500-strong infantry unit to provide United Nations convoys of relief supplies with a sufficiently strong military escort to deter attack and to fire in self-defence, showed deterrence proving ineffective. The Secretary-General submitted a 90-Day Plan of Action to provide food and non-food supplies to some 1.5 million people immediately at risk and to help an additional 3.5 million people with food, seeds and basic health and water supply. On 28 April 1992, the Secretary-General appointed Mr. Mohammed Sahnoun (Algeria) as Special Representative for Somalia.

UNOSOM I established

On 24 April 1992, the Security Council adopted resolution 751(1992), establishing UNOSOM I. The Council asked the Secretary-General to deploy immediately 50 unarmed but uniformed United Nations military observers and to continue consultations with the parties in Mogadishu. These consultations took nearly two months. On 23 June, the Secretary-General informed the Security Council that both principal factions in Mogadishu had agreed to the deployment of the unarmed observers. The observers, from Austria, Bangladesh, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, Fiji, Finland, Indonesia, Jordan, Morocco and Zimbabwe, served under Chief Military Observer Brigadier-General Imtiaz Shaheen of Pakistan.

Meanwhile, conditions within Somalia continued to deteriorate for the great majority of its people. The Secretary-General stated that "*the desperate and complex situation in Somalia will require energetic and sustained efforts on the part of the international community to break the circle of violence and hunger*". The United Nations could support the process, but the conflict could only be resolved by the people of Somalia themselves.

UNOSOM I strengthened

In resolution 767(1992) of 27 July 1992, the Security Council approved the proposal to establish four operational zones - Berbera, Bossaso, Mogadishu and Kismayo - and strongly endorsed sending a technical team to Somalia. On 24 August 1992, the Secretary-General requested an increase in the authorized strength of UNOSOM to create the four operational zones. For each zone, UNOSOM would be provided with a military unit of 750, all ranks. In addition to the two agreed areas, he proposed that units be posted to Berbera and Kismayo as soon as consultations with leaders there made it possible. The total strength of United Nations security personnel envisaged for Somalia thus rose to 3,500. On 28 August, the Security Council, by resolution 775 (1992), authorized the increase. On

8 September, it agreed to a further addition of three logistical units, raising the total authorized strength of UNOSOM to 4,219 troops and 50 military observers. The first group of security personnel arrived in Mogadishu on 14 September 1992.

100-Day Action Plan

In tandem with these preparations, the Secretary-General sought to improve planning and coordination of humanitarian action under a *100-Day Action Programme for Accelerated Humanitarian Assistance*. The plan had eight main objectives: (1) massive infusion of food aid; (2) aggressive expansion of supplementary feeding; (3) provision of basic health services and mass measles immunization; (4) urgent provision of clean water, sanitation and hygiene; (5) provision of shelter materials, blankets and clothes; (6) simultaneous delivery of seeds, tools and animal vaccines with food rations; (7) prevention of further refugee outflows and the promotion of returnee programmes; (8) institution-building and rehabilitation of civil society. Of the \$82.7 million requested for its implementation, a total of \$67.3 million was received.

Growing difficulties

Implementing the programme proved difficult. Continuing disagreements among Somali factions on the United Nations role made the countrywide and more effective deployment of UNOSOM impossible. Mr. Sahnoun resigned as Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and was replaced by Mr. Ismat Kittani of Iraq on 8 November 1992. On 28 October, General Mohamad Fahrah Aidid declared that the Pakistani UNOSOM battalion would no longer be tolerated in Mogadishu. He also ordered the expulsion within 48 hours of the UNOSOM Coordinator for Humanitarian Assistance. Subsequently, General Mohamad Fahrah Aidid's forces shelled and shot at UNOSOM forces controlling the airport, and Mr. Ali Mohamed Mahdi's forces shelled ships carrying food as they attempted to enter Mogadishu port. General Aidid objected to United Nations control of the airport; Mr. Ali Mohamed Mahdi wanted UNOSOM to take full control of the port. On 13 November, after coming under machine-gun, rifle and mortar fire, the Pakistani troops controlling the airport returned fire. In the absence of a government capable of maintaining law and order, relief organizations experienced increased hijacking of vehicles, looting of convoys and warehouses, and detention of expatriate staff.

Unified Task Force (UNITAF)

On 3 December 1992, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 794(1992). The Council welcomed the United States offer to help create a secure environment for the delivery of humanitarian aid in Somalia and authorized, under Chapter VII of the Charter, the use of "all necessary means" to do so. Resolution 794 asked States to provide military forces and to make contributions in cash or kind for the operation. Appropriate mechanisms for coordination between the

United Nations and those military forces were also to be established by the Secretary-General and States participating in the operation.

Operation Restore Hope

United States President George Bush responded to Security Council resolution 794 (1992) with a decision on 4 December to initiate *Operation Restore Hope*, under which the United States would assume the unified command of the new operation in accordance with resolution 794(1992). The Secretary-General communicated to President Bush on 8 December his concept of a division of labour between the United Nations and the United States in the following terms: "*The United States has undertaken to take the lead in creating the secure environment which is an inescapable condition for the United Nations to provide humanitarian relief and promote national reconciliation and economic reconstruction, objectives which have from the outset been included in the various Security Council resolutions on Somalia.*"

The first elements of the Unified Task Force (UNITAF) came ashore on the beaches of Mogadishu without opposition on 9 December 1992. On 13 December, United States forces had secured the airfield at Baledogle, and by 16 December they had seized Baidoa. The United States Central Command was following a four-phase programme to realize the objectives of securing major airports and seaports, key installations and food distribution points, and providing open and free passage of relief supplies, with security for convoys and relief organizations and those supplying humanitarian relief. The number of United States forces were expected to build to approximately 28,000 personnel, to be augmented by some 17,000 UNITAF troops from over 20 countries. In addition to United States forces, UNITAF included military units from Australia, Belgium, Botswana, Canada, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, India, Italy, Kuwait, Morocco, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and Zimbabwe.

National reconciliation

In the light of his Special Representative's continuing contacts with Somali parties, the Secretary-General initiated the process of national reconciliation during the first phase of action by UNITAF. To that end, he convened a preparatory meeting for a conference of national reconciliation and unity from 4 to 15 January 1993. Fourteen Somali political movements attended and concluded three agreements: the *General Agreement* of 8 January 1993; the *Agreement On Implementing The Cease-fire And On Modalities Of Disarmament*, and; the *Agreement On The Establishment Of An Ad Hoc Committee* for the conference on national reconciliation.

Transition from UNITAF to UNOSOM II

On 3 March 1993, the Secretary-General submitted to the Security Council his recommendations for effecting the transition from UNITAF to UNOSOM II. He indicated that since the adoption of Council resolution 794 (1992) in December 1992, UNITAF had deployed approximately 37,000 troops in southern and central Somalia, covering approximately 40 per cent of the country's territory. The presence and operations of UNITAF had a positive impact on the security situation in Somalia and on the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance. However, despite the improvement, a secure environment had not yet been established, and incidents of violence continued. There was still no effective functioning government in the country, no organized civilian police and no disciplined national army. The security threat to personnel of the United Nations and its agencies, UNITAF, ICRC and NGOs was still high in some areas of Mogadishu and other places in Somalia. Moreover, there was no deployment of UNITAF or UNOSOM troops to the north-east and north-west, or along the Kenyan-Somali border, where security continued to be a matter of grave concern.

The Secretary-General concluded therefore, that, should the Security Council determine that the time had come for the transition from UNITAF to UNOSOM II, the latter should be endowed with enforcement powers under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter to establish a secure environment throughout Somalia. UNOSOM II would therefore seek to complete the task begun by UNITAF for the restoration of peace and stability in Somalia. The new mandate would also empower UNOSOM II assist to the Somali people in rebuilding their economic, political and social life, through achieving national reconciliation so as to recreate a democratic Somali State.

UNOSOM II was established by the Security Council in resolution 814(1993) on 26 March 1993. UNOSOM II took over from UNITAF in May 1993. (**Click here for [UNOSOM II](#)**)

Reference Note:

For further referenced information, "The United Nations and Somalia -- 1992-1996"; Blue Books Series, Volume VIII, with an introduction by Boutros-Boutros Ghali, Secretary General of the United Nations, is available (United Nations Publication Sales No. E.96.1.8) (**Click here for [SALES AND PUBLICATIONS](#)**)

[Return to map](#)

[Return to list of peacekeeping operations](#)
