SOMALIA

COUNTRY READER
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JOHN PROPST BLANE
Vice Consul
Mogadishu (1956-1957)

Ambassador Blane was born and raised in Alabama and was educated at the University of Tennessee and at the University of Vienna, Austria as a Fulbright Scholar. Following a tour of duty with the US Army during the Koran War, he entered the Foreign Service in 1956. A specialist in African Affairs, Ambassador Blane held several positions at the State Department in Washington and served in a number of African countries including Somalia, Ethiopia (Asmara), Cameroon and Kenya. From 1982 to 1985 he served as United States Ambassador to Rwanda and from 1985 to 1988 as Ambassador to Chad. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.

Q: Your first assignment was really very, very interesting, because you were thrown in a part of the world, unlike so many of our officers who go to some of the major capitals or places, you went first, what, to Somalia?

BLANE: Mogadishu.

Q: How did that assignment come about and what were you doing there?

BLANE: As far as I know, it came about because I was one of two members of my class who spoke some Italian. This was, remember, 1956, long before the unification of former Italian

Somaliland with former British, so the language of the country at that time was Italian. Our other Italian-speaker went to Italy; I drew the long straw and went to Mogadishu.

What had happened was that the Department of State suddenly became aware that there was a continent called Africa down there. Just as sure as hell, most of these countries were going to get their independence before too long, and so the decision was made to get in and get some posts opened.

We were two that went out to Mogadishu, two of us, and we were one of six teams that went out at the same time to open what at that point were consulates in various parts of Africa in preparation for coming independence.

Now I must say that we didn't do this very well, at least the Mogadishu part very well, and I hope my colleagues in other posts did better. Because the political people in the department decided we needed a post. They hadn't exactly coordinated this with the administrative people. So we arrived to open a post with absolutely nothing.

Fortunately I had a portable typewriter, and we used that for about the first six or seven months we were there. Because it took about that long before we got our first shipment of anything from the department. So we made do with what we had.

Our first office was a small room in the Public Works Department, which the Somalis made available to us. Ultimately we got ourselves an office building put up by an Italian contractor who, as far as I know, had never built a building over one story high. And I certainly had never built any kind of building. But we managed to get this thing put up. I never saw anybody from FBO during this process.

Q: FBO is the Federal Buildings Operations, which is supposedly to supervise the...

BLANE: That's right, supposedly. Subsequently I've had a lot to do with FBO, but not during that period.

Anyway, this building was a rather miserable effort, and I felt that if it stood up for five years, we would be extremely lucky. Now, 33 years or 34 years later, whatever, it is still our embassy in Mogadishu, it is still our chancellery. They're building a new one, and we're about to get out of that monster, but it has lasted all of that time.

Q: What was the government? I mean, who did you deal with?

BLANE: At that time Somalia was a United Nations trust territory, having been created in that form following World War II, but administered by the Italians, the former colonial power. And I don't think that arrangement was found anywhere else, where we turned it right back to the former colonial power. But in effect the Italians did no governing while I was there. The governor-general was a gentleman by the name of Anselotti who said that the trusteeship arrangement gave him the authority to veto any law of the Somali legislature.

And I should have gone back to say that Somali did have a government of sorts. They were running things under the supervision of the Italians. They had a prime minister, they had a complete ministerial cabinet, and a prom.

But anyway, Anselotti said, "I can veto any law that the Somalis pass. I have never vetoed one. I don't intend ever to veto one. It is their country, and until they are independent, I will sit here and watch them run it." And he did. The Italians provided certain technical assistance, but they didn't get in the Somalis way politically at all.

There was one interesting aspect to this whole business. The Somalis hadn't had their government very long, and they weren't terribly familiar with running governments. They were just being broken in, so that come independence they would be ready. And I didn't know anything about the Foreign Service, since this was my first post.

My colleague, the other officer who was there, was a Class V officer. (We didn't send out very high-powered people in those days.) He was off is Addis Ababa doing some sort of administrative stuff, and I was at the post alone. And so I sent 'round to the government and told them I was there.

A short time thereafter I was received by the prime minister, with his full cabinet assembled. He sat at one end of the long table, I sat at the other, and all the ministers were on either side. I thought, "Hell, that's the way American vice consuls were received everywhere." I've gone downhill ever since. I was never received in such a fashion again!

Q: Did we play much of a role there? Were you getting any instructions to do this or do that?

BLANE: No. Basically our instruction was to get a post opened, which we did. To make contact with the local political people, which we did. To report what little there was to report, and there wasn't a great deal going on at the time. I don't remember having gotten any political instructions at all. If I did, they were of such a nature that they weren't important enough to stick with me. Basically we were to get a post opened and create a presence, and that's what we did.

RICHARD ST. F. POST
Desk Officer
Mogadishu (1958-1960)

Richard Post admits that he is a proud "Westerner." He was born in Spokane, Washington but grew up along the Bitterroot Range in Idaho. The family moved to the Bay area of California and then to Montana; he was disappointed when the family decided to settle down in Darien, Connecticut. He attended Harvard University and in 1952 entered the Foreign Service. He served in Ethiopia, Hong Kong, Somalia, Swaziland, Lesotho, Angola, Portugal, Canada, Pakistan, and the

United Nations. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on February 14, 1990.

Q: *What was our American interest in Ethiopia at the time?*

POST: We had, as our major interest at the time, the radio base in Asmara, a new station. It was primarily a Navy communications base. It had been an Italian radio station before the war. The British took it over during the war and we took it over from the British. It was basically the quid pro quo for what we gave Ethiopia in the way of assistance. In fact from the point when we had expanded that into a major installation, we justified just about everything we did, in favor of Haile Selassie, by that base. In other words, we had to come forward with the aid he was requesting from us, because if we didn't do it, he would close the base down. A little later on, when we had established a position in Mogadishu, Somalia, anything we wanted to do with respect to the Somalis was circumscribed by the alleged effect this would have on the emperor's attitude on the maintenance of Kagnew station.

Let me get back briefly to Kagnew Station because my service in and on that part of the world went through various repeats. I was in Ethiopia as my first post. Then a few years later, I was in Mogadishu, Somalia, from 1958 to 1960. Then I went back to Washington. I was briefly on the Libya desk, but then I took over the Ethiopia/Somalia desk. And after the moon went over the tops of the mountains a few more times, I found myself back in Washington, in the seventies, 1975, 76, 77, as Office Director for East Africa, which included Ethiopia and Somalia.

So I authored a NSM (National Security Memorandum) and got clearance throughout the Washington establishment, including the Defense Department, for a revised policy towards that part of the world, where we would scale down our operations in Ethiopia and we would try to build our positions in the countries surrounding, including Somalia, where we were not in very good standing at the time. The Soviets were very big in Somalia. We were also not well found in Sudan. But we had prospects of advancing our position in both Sudan and Somalia, particularly if we scaled down our operations in Ethiopia.

Q: *Then you were assigned to Mogadishu, in 1961. What were you doing?*

POST: I was the number two in what was then a Consulate General. The political officer. I did a lot of reporting on the internal politics of Somalia which was a very instructive thing to do. One had to get very, very knowledgeable about the tribal and subtribal breakdowns of that society. Of course it was a fascinating transition time because it was the time when it was a UN trust territory under Italian supervision. So we had to deal with Somalis but also with Italian officials, and very often the dealings with one were kind of antipathetic to the dealings with the other. The Somalis had by then their own Prime Minister, although it was not yet an independent country. They had a legislature. They had just appointed the first Somali to be the Chief of Police of the country, Mohamed Abshir Musa. He was appointed over the head of another police officer, Siad Barre, who is now the president of the country. That meant the language, the administration of the country was in Italian, so we had to learn Italian. Unfortunately, there was no time for me, between what I had done just before and when I had arrived, to take any Italian language training.

What had happened was, when I was in Hong Kong, the Department had come to the realization that independence was coming to a lot of countries in Africa, probably a lot sooner than we thought at that time, and we had better have some people who know something about Africa there. So they sent me from Hong Kong to Boston University, which was one of only two schools at that time that had African program, the African Research and Study Program. So I did that for an academic year. At the end of that they had arranged a program which was called the African Seminar. They selected twenty of us Foreign Service Officers to go out on a three month tour of Africa. We went first to Ghana which by then of course had already become independent. It had become independent the year before in 1957. Ghana was the center for the study of English-speaking West Africa. We did also go to Lagos and then on to Leopoldville, and Stanleyville, and then to Kampala, Makerere University was our center for our study of East Africa. Then on to Nairobi, down into Rhodesia and South Africa. We actually drove through Swaziland on our route to Lourenço Marques in Mozambique.
Anyhow that is what I had spent my time doing. Otherwise I would have been going to language school.

Q: *What about going to Mogadishu. You had the Italians ready to give up. How was it dealing with them?*

POST: It was a mixed bag. Some of the Italians were still clearly hoping that somehow they could still hang in there. As you may recall, at the end of the war one of the questions before the United Nations was what to do about the former Italian colonies in Africa. They decided that in the case of Libya, it would become independent, virtually immediately, in 1952. Libya was to become independent on December 25th. I remember that the fellow who was my chief subsequently in Mogadishu, had been in Tripoli at the time and he was trying to urge the United States to come forward with an aid package to announce to the Libyans before independence came, so that they would have an independence gift. And I remember him telling me that he kept firing telegrams telling them, "We only have so many shopping days before Christmas." That was decided as far as Libya was concerned. Eritrea was to become federated with Ethiopia. Somalia was to become independent in ten years time, December 2, 1960. In fact the Somalis were working to a faster time table. But some of the Italians were hoping that something would happen that would enable them to stay in there. So they were working with Somalis who they thought would enable them to do that. Others were playing it very straight. Most of them were playing it fairly straight. And they were going about it in the right way.

I remember having gone through Somalia back in 1954, when I was serving in Addis, I took a trip to Mogadishu

Q: *What were the American interests as you saw them?*

POST: I suppose again the dominant interest in that part of the world was Kagnew Station. American interest was to try and contribute to stability in the horn of Africa. The Ethiopians and the Somalis didn't exactly enjoy each other's company and yet they had to live side by side. The border was not an agreed-upon border. It was an administrative line. The Italians and the

Ethiopians, one of the things they were supposed to accomplish before Somalia became independent was to get that border dispute settled. The main problem was that the border cut across an area that was totally settled by Somalis. All that area of southeastern Ethiopia was inhabited by Somalis, administered by Ethiopians and the Somalis didn't like them one bit. Actually at the time that I drove through in 1954, there was an additional little area, a little strip of land, a buffer between Ethiopian Ogaden and British Somaliland. It was an area called the Reserved Territory. It was reserved and kept under British control because there was a good deal of conflict between some of the Somalis in the Ethiopian interior and some who came from the coast. As you know, the Somalis are a nomadic group, meaning that they practice what is called in the trade, transhumance. The Somalis that lived nearer the coast had their own home wells there. They tend to dry up after a while and when the rains come, they leave and go into the interior where there will be a certain amount of surface water and where the wells will then be restocked by the rain. They go into the interior and stay maybe half a year there, four and five months, then they go back to their own homes, by which time, the water table has gone up and they can survive another half year there. Meanwhile the ones in the interior are doing the same thing. So they get to this area where there are interior wells and you have a certain amount of conflict.

The good British officers could calm this sort of thing down. When I went down, I went through at a place called Awareh. There was a British officer there who had just arrived, because his predecessor had been murdered by the locals. It was a kind of rough position for British officers to be in.

Our hope was that by establishing a Consulate General and then an Embassy, we could, on the one hand, make it very difficult for the Italians to renege on the mandated departure from Somalia, that we could develop relations with the Somali leadership of the future, and that we could encourage the development of a democratic society in Somalia, and we could hopefully mute some of the problems that might develop between Somalia and Ethiopia.

Q: *You were there for the independence ceremonies and all that?*

POST: Well it was interesting. What the UN resolution had said was that Italian Somalia was the one that was to become independent. They had moved the date up to July 1st 1960, it was supposed to take place on December 2nd. Up until just a few months before there was the question of what was going to happen to British Somaliland. The Somalis have this five pointed star on their flag which was blue with a white star which represents the five Somalilands, that is, the former Italian Somaliland, the former British Somaliland, the Northern Frontier District of Kenya, the Ogaden of Ethiopia and French Somaliland, which is now the Republic of Djibouti. But things moved rather rapidly in British Somaliland, the British authorities, at least some of them, because there was ambivalence there, too, the British finally agreed that British Somaliland would join Somalia. Actually, how the mechanics worked, it became independent four days before the Italian part. And I was dispatched to Hargeysa to represent the United States at the independence celebration of British Somaliland. I stayed with a British officer, a political officer with whom I had had dealings in the past. I had been there many times, reporting on the developing politics there. And he made a superb suggestion, when he said, "I have a bunch of

envelopes. I'll give you half and write your name on them and your address, and then we'll take them down to the Post Office and put some stamps on them, and get them cancelled. And these will be the only first day covers, and nobody else has done it and you'll have a gold mine. So we did this and rushed down and got the date of independence stamped on them. Of course over the years, any time a guest in our house expressed any interest in philately, my wife would give away one. Four days later British Somaliland was no longer a separate state, it was part of the combined state of Somalia.

Q: *Was this a forced marriage between Italian and British Somalia?*

POST: No, the Somalis all wanted this. There was only a question of whether the British thought it was right for their Somaliland to join. And of course there were a lot of differences. The British had a very competent Somali civil service, a lot more than in Mogadishu. There was some fear in Mogadishu that these British Somalis would take over. And to a certain extent, they did. As I mentioned, when I was there, Italian was the language of most social intercourse. There were quite a number of Somalis even down in Mogadishu who did speak English, because the British had been there briefly at the end of the war and they had trained some of the police officers. It was quite clear, except to the Italians, that in the course of time English was going to replace Italian. One of the reasons that Siad Barre had been favored by some of the elements in the Italian administration to become the first police chief, was that he didn't speak any English, only Italian. Whereas the other guy, Mohamed Abshu, was fluent in English. When I went back in 1977 at the time of the Ethiopian-Somali war over the Ogaden, Siad Barre, then President conducted all of his conversations with foreigners in English. English has definitely replaced Italian now.

Q: *How were the relations between ourselves and the Somalis.*

POST: We had very good relations with them and I think we cultivated good relations among a whole spectrum of politicians. With perhaps one exception. There was one outfit called the Great Somalia League. We were not about to talk to them, we would talk to them but not show too much sympathy for their particular aim which was to unite all of the five Somalilands. All of the Somalis wanted to have all five points of the star as one nation. But this one was militant about it. They were prepared to go to war. And there were allegations that perhaps the Russians were messing around with them. But with the bulk of the politicians, we had quite good relations.

Q: *Were you concerned with the "Soviet menace" at that point?*

POST: Well, not all that much. They weren't there before independence. They did come in and open up an Embassy just after independence. I was only there a few months after independence so I didn't experience any effort on the part of the Soviets to penetrate people.

I suppose the very fact of our having opened the Consulate there, was designed to give ourselves a foot in the door and establish relations with the politicians before the Russians could come along and mess things up. They did come along and mess things up.

I was again involved in 1963-64 because by that time I was desk officer for both Ethiopia and Somalia. The Somalis had decided by then that they would have an army. They didn't have one before, they only had the police. So they decided to have an army. Every self-respecting country had an army. They came to us and the Italians and the British and said that they would like some arms for their army. We were looking over our shoulders at Kagnew Station and saying well, what you want on that list is just a little too much. I felt that it was inevitable that they were going to have an army and that it would be wise for us to have some influence and control over the way this thing developed by becoming involved with arms supplies, despite the emperor. I thought we should be able to go to the emperor and explain to him that it was in his interest to have countries that were friendly to him supplying the Somali army, because they are going to get it anyhow, and it might not be from someone so anxious to cooperate with Ethiopia. Not so willing to exert leverage to keep them from using that army against Ethiopia.

Well, that got really bogged down in our bureaucracy. We finally came forward with a little package. It was pretty punk. We got the British to kick in something, we got the Italians to kick in something, and the Somalis took one look at this package and said, "We're off to Moscow." And that is exactly what they did.

Q: *I was a little bit involved with the Horn of Africa. I was hauled out of Saudi Arabia and made the INR officer for the Horn of Africa from '60 to '61. There was always a push and pull between Somalia and Ethiopia, but the chips always fell to Ethiopia. Kagnew Station was it, wasn't it?*

POST: Kagnew Station was driving our policy. No doubt about it. Our AID program, for example. We would try and plead for more aid for Somalia but were told, "You can't get it because in the allocation for Africa, Ethiopia gets the major share ...."

Q: *I thought that Somalia could be bought for a fairly small price. But everything was predicated on Kagnew. Were people in the State Department challenging the importance of Kagnew at that point?*

POST: No, they were not. The State Department, aside from those who had served in Mogadishu, perhaps, was quite comfortable with the emperor. He was behaving they way they wanted excepted when he came through and wanted outlandish requests for aid which we tried to scale down. But by and large he was safely in our camp and the military insisted on the importance of Kagnew and the State Department wasn't in the position to challenge that. So I think that basically the State Department went along with that. I think it went along specifically with not rocking the boat as far as Kagnew was concerned.

Q: *What was our impression of the threat of the Soviets to Somalia at that time?*

POST: I think at the time we gave, for our own reasons and following our own policy, we attributed much too much importance to Ethiopia, so much that we did not think the Russians would endanger the possibility of improving their position in Ethiopia, the much bigger prize, by doing something in Somalia that would earn them the wrath of the Ethiopians. I think that was our thinking. Mistaken but there it was.

Q: *What was the effect of the Soviets?*

POST: I then had a gap in direct dealings with the Horn from 1964 til I became office director in 1976. Clearly the very fact of the Soviets supplying the Somalis with arms and a lot more of them than we would have supplied them with, they built up the army as their favored institution. The police were still very much Western-oriented, headed by Mohammed Abshir, who was a very close friend of mine. The Soviets built the army up and, although I don't have any evidence that they engineered the coup, but certainly the instrument of the coup was the army they had created. So what happened as a result, if you can fill in the gaps from some other people, you may find that they were responsible for one of the few genuine democracies in Africa being overthrown and turned into a military dictatorship. From that point on things got pretty tough for our people. They couldn't move around. When I was there, I went all over that country. Couldn't move around, confined to the Embassy, those kind of things. Of course then the Soviets went ahead and built their air base at Berbera, which we now are enjoying. There is a certain irony involved.

Q: *It was right in the heart of the Brezhnev era.*

POST: Right. Here we had a situation in Ethiopia, in the Horn of Africa, where a basically Marxist group had taken over from our guy, Haile Selassie. The Soviets, meanwhile, were ensconced down in Somalia. So things were looking a little bit dicey for us. The sort of dominant view, which I had to battle was that the Soviets have all they could ever want in Somalia. They have an air base in Berbera, through that control of Aden. There is nothing in Ethiopia that is comparable. My view was, "Oh that's quite the contrary." Ethiopia is a much bigger prize. It projects them into the continent. They would have the same kind of strategic position, vis a vis the Red Sea and the Gulf, that they have in Somalia, they might even think they could have it both ways. But I think that if they have a chance to move into Ethiopia, they are going to take it. The head of the Organization of African Unity Headquarters is there. It is a much bigger country. All these things. Plus the fact that the Russians, curiously enough, have a long historical connection with Ethiopia. Pushkin's grandmother was an Ethiopian. They have a long romance with Ethiopia.

But, Moose didn't want to have problems in the Horn of Africa and didn't want to spend much time when they did develop. Because he had these other preoccupations.

Q: *What role did we play in the war?*

POST: Our decision to reduce our MAAG and the fact that they told us to pack up and get out, that happened before the outbreak of the Ogaden War. What we had in the way of theoretical leverage was only with the Ethiopians. We had virtually no position in Somalia at that time. At least at the start of the outbreak. So what we could have conceivably used as leverage was the fact that the Ethiopians were still heavily dependent on us for military supplies. But that was changing because the Russians started pouring in massive supplies, airlifts, just massive airlifts of stuff.

I remember another thing I had to fight within the bureaucracy. That was, on the face of it, looking at the situation, you had Mengistu theoretically in charge in Addis Ababa but there were insurgencies all over the country. There were some groups opposed to the regime in Addis Ababa, there was fighting going on all over the place. There was the trouble with Somalia. The thought was why would the Russians ever get themselves involved with a thing like that. How could they possibly think that they could control a situation like that. And from having, not lived through it in Angola, but maintained something of an interest in Angola, I suggested that they have a card they can play. They can whistle up the Cubans as they did in Angola. Even the Cuban desk didn't agree with me on this, saying that Castro had much too much on his plate. My argument was, look, if he can do something that is going to tweak the Eagle's tail, he will grab it. Of course that is what happened. As soon as the war broke out, they got the Cubans to do the fighting for them. We've moved away from your question, but...

Q: *No, this is it. In many ways, though, it was out of our control.*

POST: Yes, it was. Eventually the Somalis at the start moved very quickly and got as far as Dire Dawa, which is well inside. Basically, they had captured nearly all of the Ogaden and were going beyond it. That was when the Cubans moved in. We then saw that they weren't going to be able to maintain this position. We had been urging them to withdraw, before that. But we didn't have an awful lot of leverage with the Somalis. So, having learned that the Soviets were supplying the Ethiopians, the Somalis more or less terminated their relationship with the Soviets. They had already made some approaches to us about arms and we had been saying, "You have much more than you need, clearly, because you are using it for a purpose we could never support." Well then the Cubans started beating up on the Somalis and beating them back. We then eventually went to the Somalis, in fact with a Presidential message, saying if you pull your forces back, we will undertake to study your needs for the kind of rational defensive posture that you might need. In effect, that if they pulled back entirely from the Ethiopian territory, that we would take over as their arms supplier.

There was an interesting little contretemps at that point. When the Ethiopians and the Cubans started moving, rolling them back, a lot of people started getting apprehensive about the possibility that we would have the reverse process. And policy in those days was made in a very haphazard fashion. Let me tell you. We would get a call from the NSC staff, Paul Hensey, saying that Brzezinski wants to hold a meeting on Somalia, tomorrow at 9 o'clock. We want no papers and no agenda. We just want you to bring your principals and we will discuss it. Which meant that Brzezinski wanted to dominate what policy there was. Well we immediately, that is I, the guys in the Pentagon, would exchange papers quickly and have something for our principals to take with them when they went. So that they wouldn't be totally locked out. Well, in one of these sessions, Brzezinski suggested that maybe what we should do would be to move an aircraft carrier into the Red Sea as a signal to the Ethiopians and the Cubans that they had better stop, or we're going to use our military power against them. And I was on two different minds on this. On the one hand, I didn't think it was necessary because I was persuaded, and in fact this is the view that prevailed, I was persuaded that the Ethiopians would not give up the one saving grace that they had as far as the rest of Africa was concerned and the rest of the world, and that is the

sanctity of borders. This was their big card against the Somalis. They certainly would lose that if they violated the Somali border. So I didn't think that they were going to roll over that border at all. On the other hand we had been getting a lot of flak from the Saudis for not helping the Somalis more. And if we had moved in a carrier, even though it would not have stopped the Ethiopians, they would have stopped anyhow, and then we would have gotten credit with the Saudis. In the event there were no carriers available that were close enough.

Q: *Then you left about that time?*

POST: By the time I left, which was in August of 1978, the war had stopped. The Somalis did pull back. We were then in the process of trying to see if we would carry through on this Presidential commitment. I was arguing that we had to. That we had a Presidential commitment. I was running into a lot of flak because we were getting a lot of intercepts indicating that the Somalis were still screwing around inside the Ogaden, and therefore not living up to what had prompted us to do this. My argument was that the Somalis are always going to screw around in the Ogaden. They had been doing it forever and would continue to do it. But we had a clear interest in establishing a solid position in Somalia by living up to our commitments. Okay, let's put as many constraints as we can on it, but live up to the commitment. They finally agreed to send Moose out there on a fact-finding mission to report about the time I left.

DONALD S. BROWN
Program Officer, USOM
Mogadishu (1959-1961)

Donald S. Brown was raised in New York. He attended Cornell for a year and then attended Military Officer Candidate School. He finished his undergraduate degree at Antioch College. In addition to Algeria, Mr. Brown served in Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Egypt, and Zaire. He was interviewed on December 4, 1996 by W. Haven North.

BROWN: We arrived in Mogadishu, where I was assigned as Program Officer, about 18 months before the 30 June 1960 Somali Independence Day and stayed about one year after that date. Since Italian and British Somaliland joined together only at independence, our first 18 months were in the Italian area and we worked largely (though not entirely) with Italian officials - most of whom stayed on as important advisers in the post-independence period.

The rationale for a program in Somalia at that time was not abundantly clear, although it was considered that the Horn of Africa was a geographically important area where stability should be preserved. In effect, it appears to have been undertaken largely as a result of Italian interest in assuring some economic improvement in a country where they had important stakes. The mission itself, up to independence, was in fact an off-shoot of the USOM mission to Italy. While the US presence had been promoted primarily by the Italian Government, there were substantial differences between what the US sought to achieve and Italian interests. As in many other Point 4

type technical assistance programs of this period, the United States sought to build capacity for the future -in agriculture, in educational and training programs and the like (but also in a strengthened national police force). The Italians, on the other hand, were far more political in their efforts, aimed primarily at assuring a continued major presence and role after independence.

Will Muller was a capable and active Mission Director. We had some excellent senior technical staff, but also some with really strange ideas-our senior engineer wanted to create a new port at Chisimaio by using nuclear explosions! Although the diplomatic mission was only a Consulate in the initial period, it had highly able young officers, especially Dick Post as Political Officer and Mike Ely as Economic Officer and they were a constant help to us in the aid mission.

Although I was then only an FSS-5, I was named as Program Officer in an FSS-3 position and my deputy was Clark George, who was himself an FSS-3. This could have been a terribly embarrassing and difficult situation for both of us, but especially for him. I give him great credit for taking it well, making it possible for us to work productively together. Will Muller's understanding was also critical in making this relationship work.

Life was certainly not easy in Mogadishu-with water again a major problem. The household system used saline water delivered by truck while drinking water was limited to that in jerry cans and large glass demijohns delivered every two weeks (but the demijohns at least serve as lamp bases in our household today). The first house to which we were assigned by the administrative section had shutters but no windows-but lots of bugs. While we sprayed the interior once every two weeks, the lack of windows made this a rather useless process. The geckos were useful for some bug control although rather annoying when they fell on us in bed. One had to close all water passages (sinks, bathtubs etc.) tightly or the cockroaches invaded in force. We gave our dog to friends because of the heavy tick infestation in the yard. Constant illness hit family members, all exacerbated by an absolute lack of decent medical facilities. Our son Dean became so sick and so weak Micheline had to take him to Nairobi for over a month of care and recovery. We thank to this day the thoughtfulness and consideration at what was then Gertrude Gardens Hospital in Muthaiga.

Soon after that, the senior State Department Medical Adviser visited Mogadishu and immediately condemned the house and ordered us out of it. Amazingly enough, several years later a State regional medical adviser was assigned to that same house and ended up being evacuated with gangrene infections. One does wonder whether our systems couldn't have better memory banks.

The USOM mission was located in a compound of several buildings which had earlier been used, we were told, as a brothel for Italian military officers. It had gone downhill by the time we occupied it. I was fascinated when several years later I visited Mogadishu (as IFAD Vice President) and found myself calling on the Permanent Secretary of Interior who was located in the same office which I had occupied when assigned to Somalia.
At the time of independence Somalis proclaimed their singleness, whether coming from Italian, British, or French Somaliland, the Ogaden region of Ethiopia or the Northeast province of Kenya-thus the five pointed Somali flag-because of common heritage, language (spoken but not then written), religion etc. Little was then said, particularly at the political level, of the

importance of clan relationships although some clan based songs were forbidden. At one point the Somali-American Women's Club, of which Micheline was President, organized a sort of dancing lesson for those Somali women whose husbands had studied abroad and enjoyed Western dances. Some of the Somali women then demonstrated their songs, several of them being forbidden. The police finally came and closed down the affair - and the next day Russian diplomats were quoted as saying this was another example of Western cultural imperialism. In any event, I must recognize my own lack of foresight in failing to understand just how deep these currents were running and what they would mean in terms of total breakdown of any kind of organized state 30 years later.

At independence there were virtually no Somalis with university training. To the degree we could, the USOM program put heavy emphasis on educational activities, and these were pursued by others who followed us. It was good to see, during my visit many years later, the much larger number of trained and able Somali technicians, many of whom had studied in the United States. It is regrettable that political wisdom did not match that growth in technical ability.

We were blessed during this period with the birth of our third son, Christopher, although that event had to take place in Nairobi because of the lack of proper facilities in Mogadishu. On the whole, while we had many Somali friends and found them an attractive and agreeable people, for a variety of reasons this was our hardest and least well remembered post.

HORACE G. TORBERT
Ambassador
Somalia (1962-1965)

Horace G. Torbert grew up in Washington, DC. He graduated from Yale in 1932, and attended Harvard Business School. During his career he has been posted in Vienna, Western European Affairs, Rome, and Budapest. He was also the Ambassador to Somalia and Bulgaria, and the Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations. He was interviewed by Professor Charles Stuart Kennedy on August 31, 1988.

TORBERT: I was then picked out of a list somewhere, I guess, and called back to be interviewed in the White House to go to Somalia. I think I noticed a question on your list saying, "How did you get there?" I got there because there were more missions opening up in Africa, and not many people with experience, and they needed people to go as ambassadors.

Q: *It also was not an area where they were sending political appointees.*

TORBERT: No. Political appointees were certainly not clamoring for Somalia. One of the three official languages of Somalia was Italian, and by that time I spoke a reasonable amount of Italian. I was apparently considered to be an ambassador. Again, without wild enthusiasm, we went home in the middle of the worst cold spell Washington has ever had, and tried to find tropical

clothes, which we couldn't find. This was Christmas 1962. Eventually, we got down to Mogadishu, having stopped off in Aden to buy a couple of lightweight suits which I couldn't find in Washington. (Laughter)

Q: *When you went to Somalia, let's start first with the embassy. How did you find the staffing there? I'm not talking about the number of people, but the caliber of people there.*

TORBERT: I was perfectly satisfied with the way it was staffed. I got a new DCM at the same time I went out, Charlie Rogers, with whom I had been acquainted. He was going there even less enthusiastically than I was, but he was a very good man, both from the point of view of intelligence, and he and his wife were good company, which is rather important in that kind of a post.

I had several very good officers. They were sometimes, let's face it, not as sophisticated as the ones that I'd been used to in Rome and Vienna and Madrid, but they were willing and hard working and interested.

We had a lot of people there because, in the first place, Somalia, which had one of the lowest per capita incomes in the world, was getting more aid from all sources per capita than any other country in the world at that time, a lot from the UN, a big UN mission there, not such a terrible volume from us, but it was mostly technical assistance, which meant there were a lot of people in the AID mission there. We had a Peace Corps. So there were quite a lot of people. There were, in a way, more operational responsibilities than I'd ever had, although it wasn't as big as the operation in Vienna, but I was directly running it, whereas in Vienna, I was only advising them on how to run it, so to speak.

Q: *What were our interests in Somalia at the time?*

TORBERT: At that particular time, I think our interests in Somalia were primarily to help these new emerging countries to develop, and secondarily, but not all that importantly, to keep the opposition out. That is, to keep the Soviets and the Chinese out, an objective which I and my immediate successors were notoriously unsuccessful.

However, in Somalia, we had a particular problem, in that Somalia was claiming about a third of Ethiopia and about a fifth of Kenya, which was populated by Somalians. It was inscribed in their constitution, no less, that the object of the country was to unify all Somalis under a single flag. This gave us two strikes already there, because we were heavily involved in Ethiopia, as you will recall. We had the communications base at Asmara.

Q: *Kagnew Station.*

TORBERT: Kagnew Station, which was very important for our communications. At that time there were no satellite communications. That was the center for all our communications for all that part of Africa and the Middle East, very, very important. We also were doing a mapping survey of Ethiopia, which we were very much interested in, which involved a lot of overflights.

And we were providing both considerable economic assistance and heavy military assistance to the Ethiopians. The Ethiopians and the Somalis were not actually at war, but Somalia being a nomadic country, the borders were essentially open. They'd migrate, these tribes, and every now and then the Ethiopians would try to clamp down on them. It was very hard to tell how many Somalis there were or whether they were really Ethiopians or Somalis because they moved back and forth and crossed these borders. There were a number of clashes, and every time a Somali got killed, he got killed with a bullet made in America. This became sort of a diplomatic problem. The Somalis, in a way, seemed to understand this. They didn't like it a bit, but they were willing. I guess they wanted aid so bad, they'd take it from us no matter what.

Q: *Could you describe what the government was in Somalia and whom you dealt with and how?*

TORBERT: Somalia, as you recall, was a combination of Italian Somaliland, which was all the southern part, the overwhelmingly large geographical part, which had been occupied by the British for quite a while during the war. And British Somaliland, which was the northern tip which the British treated as a protectorate. It was occupied in order to protect Aden and the Gulf of Aden. But the British had done a pretty good job of educating their people. At least they had one high school up there from which they graduated a lot of really acceptable high school graduates, whereas the Italians, up to very shortly before independence, the highest grade you could go in Italian Somaliland was the third grade. I remember being told this by Aden Abdulla Osman, the president and a wonderful, what seemed like an old, guy then, although I understand that today, 25 years later, he's still going strong, but he had had three years of formal education and then had gotten a job as a medical assistant in some Italian field medical facility. That was his total education, but he was a very intelligent, shrewd guy. He didn't speak much English, but he did speak Italian and Arabic and Somali.

To answer your question, the government was basically an Italian type, but with some British influence, a Parliamentary government. Somalia had, in a sense, almost a democratic tradition, in that the tribal structure there was always governed by shirs. These shirs were sort of town meetings of the tribes, and they had a sense of discussion. It seemed like an almost idyllic opportunity for a good democracy. During the time I was there, it really worked pretty well that way.

The trouble with the Somalis, in a sense, was that they wanted assistance and they were very opportunistic about it, and they always recognized the government that would give them the most assistance, they thought. So they figured that the Communist Chinese were bigger than the National Chinese, and therefore they'd probably give them more assistance. I don't think this was right, but that was their reasoning. They recognized Communist China, and, of course, they recognized the Soviet Union. They recognized, however, West Germany, because they figured West Germany would give them assistance. (Laughter)

Q: *This was the time when you couldn't recognize West Germany and East Germany at the same time.*

TORBERT: And China's the same way. So they sort of split it.

Q: *So their policy was driven by "What's in it for me?" For basically aid.*

TORBERT: Pretty much, yes.

Q: *How about with this recognition of China? Did you get involved in this?*

TORBERT: When I came there, I was always a little bit of a rebel on these things. I believed that this not speaking to a Chinaman was hogwash.

Q: *We're talking about the Communist Chinese. We were supposed to ignore them.*

TORBERT: By that time, however, it was beginning to ease up a little bit, you see. This was the early '60s, and we were already thinking in long terms on this.

I used to play games with the Chinese representative there by trying to get him to speak to me, which he refused to do the whole time. But it was surely a game. He had almost no influence, and he lived totally cut off, probably worse than we were living, more cut off than we were in Budapest, for example. Later on, Zhou En-lai...

Q: *Zhou En-lai came to visit there for three days.*

TORBERT: Yes. I was there during the time Zhou En-lai came. He did a very good job.

Q: *What did you do at that point, stay out of the way?*

TORBERT: Well, I didn't push myself into anything, but as I recall it, I was curious and interested. Anything that there was that the diplomatic corps was supposed to do, I did. I think I got clearance for that, but I'm not sure.

All the time I was in Somalia, we had extremely good relations with the Somali government. I had complete access to all the ministries. We had some people that were more favorable to us than others and so on. Not that we didn't have trouble. Shortly after I arrived, at that time the independence of Kenya was coming up, and the British had gone through the exercise of taking some sort of a sampling of opinion in the northern frontier district, which the Somalis claimed, as to what the population wanted to do. The answer came up overwhelmingly that they wanted to join Somalia. But this would not do. The British, of course, had much greater interest in Kenya, and they wanted to keep their relations there. So they, in their usual wisdom, decided that the two governments could settle it between each other after independence. With that, the Somalis forthwith broke relations with Great Britain, although I tried to persuade them not to, telling them it wouldn't do them any good, but they did.

At that time, I was making my first major swing through northern Somalia. We traveled in Piper Cub-type planes more or less around the country. I was up there with the AID director and the Peace Corps director and a couple of other people. We got word on the radio from Mog that we

ought to come back.

Q: *"Mog," meaning Mogadishu.*

TORBERT: Mogadishu. Because things seemed to be cooking up to demonstrations there. So we started back, but in those small planes and Somali's so big, we had to stop somewhere overnight. So we stopped at a little town called Galcaio, which is right in central Somalia, and there were a couple of our Peace Corps people there. There was also a Koranic school run by the Egyptians. Nasser was in charge in Egypt, and they were very jealous of their influence in Somalia and rather opposed to us.

We slept overnight in an oil company compound there, and in the morning were awakened by the shouts of the entire town staging a demonstration outside the compound. The provincial governor was with us, and the provincial governor was from another province and another tribe, and he was twice as scared as I was, I must say. (Laughter) He and I went out to the gate and met with the leaders of this group. They said we were the cousins and tribal relatives of the British, and therefore we were equally at fault because we hadn't persuaded them not to commit this horrendous thing on the frontier district.

I made my most brilliant speech about George Washington and one thing and another, and persuaded them that we were not hand-in-glove with the British, and we were in their interests. They said, "Fine." We said, "We're going home now. We've got to go out to the air strip," which was a mile or so outside of town, a flat place in the desert, really. We started out. My wife was there with me.

Q: *Tully, we were talking about your being in this small village in Somalia and how there had been protests because of the British stand on Somalis in Kenya.*

TORBERT: Yes. I believe I just said that I had been extremely persuasive in talking to the leaders of these groups in explaining our position, and they had agreed to leave us alone. So we gathered we had several four-wheel-drive vehicles there, and we had quite a local contingent of Somali police and the governor and my wife. We decided that the governor and I would go in the lead car, and then we would put my wife in the second car with a group of Somali police, and then there would be another police car behind that, and we'd go on out to the airport. We thought we'd be all right, but we were a little bit nervous. The governor was probably more nervous than I was.

We drove out and there was nobody immediately outside of the gate of the compound. We started to drive through the middle of the village, a village of 2,000 or 3,000 people, I guess, mud huts, mostly. We came to the first crossroads, and there was a large contingent of "welcomers," each with a rock the size of a baseball or softball in this hand, which they immediately started throwing at us. The governor was driving my car, and I got a great respect for the Land Rover which we were in, because the windshield withstood the blow of the first one of these rocks that hit us. So the governor did a quick U-turn or something and went off through another part of the town, and we ran into another group. We avoided those and we got two or three miles out to

where we'd left the airplane on the airstrip, with a large stream of demonstrators following on foot. The ammunition, which was rocks, was plentiful everywhere. It was almost desert country, but there were lots of rocks around. So they had plenty of ammunition. They didn't have to depend on foreign aid for that.

We sprinted out and threw ourselves in this airplane, warmed it up, took off over the heads of this oncoming crowd. I later found out that my wife was having an even more traumatic experience than the rest of us because she was separated from me, and she was alone in a Landrover with nothing but police, which was absolutely the safest place to be, except I'd forgotten that this was probably the first time that she had been exposed to being entirely alone with nothing but blacks around her. In another few months, this wouldn't have bothered her a bit, but she had been a bit terrified.

We got out of there over the heads of the crowd, and of course, this was, in a way, just a form of exuberance. I later, when I was mad at the prime minister, talked to him about his people trying to kill me once. I know they had no intention of killing us, although they might well have done so if those stones had landed.

We got back to town and had a little trouble there for a while, or at least were there while it was going on, the same kind of general protest uprising, and the British ambassador, meanwhile, either had left or was leaving, I can't remember which by that time, and went on to become consul general in San Francisco, from which he retired, I think. We later took over the British interests there, which I'm not sure was good for us. The Department rather resisted it, but as a practical matter, we were about the only people who could do it, and I said I thought we ought to take it on. We did, and so I represented Great Britain, as well as the United States there for two or three years, I guess the whole time I was there.

There couldn't have been anything more different between Somalia and, say, Italy, where I had been, or for that matter, Hungary. In Italy, it was all subtleties, and in Somalia, everything was hanging out. I had a fairly big administrative job to do and a morale-building job. We had to build our own school. Our own children, by that time, were in prep school or college, but we had lots of small children out there, and we built a school. We had a large, as I say, AID program, under which we were building a school for Somalia, and a little bit of roadwork, but mostly sort of agricultural technical assistance.

The Somalis, at that time, had not yet reached the stage of planting crops in rows, which shows just exactly how primitive, essentially nomadic, essentially herding culture this was. There were a few Italian banana plantations along the two small rivers in the country. Other than that, there was a part of the country that had sufficient rainfall, equivalent, more or less, with our upper Midwest in Nebraska, the Dakotas, Minnesota, that type of country, where they could have grown fairly substantial crops. I remember having forecast or said or used in all my statements to visitors or researchers or the Department on this subject, that they should plan on a minimum of 20 years to really make a dent in developing Somalia. Of course, we had one year AID appropriations. As a matter of fact, it's far more than 20 years now, and I doubt if Somalia has progressed all that much in the meantime. But it has been shaken up with political turnabouts in

between.

Q: *One of the issues that seemed to be going was the switch, about the time you were there, to getting arms from the Communist Bloc.*

TORBERT: This really did not happen on a large scale until after I left, but was undoubtedly influenced by decisions I participated in. The Somalis very much wanted substantial military assistance from us. They had been getting some Army military assistance from the Soviets, and essentially what happened was that we aided and abetted and supported the police. They were led by a very interesting character about which a good deal has been written, General Mohamed Abshir, who was and still is a good friend of mine, although he spent much of the intervening time in jail.

The Soviets had helped out a little bit on the military. We were trying to prevent an increase in the Soviet military aid. They, of course, had influence with the military leadership and we had influence with the police leadership, which we figured was much more important. The Somalis were interested in our supplying them more aid, which they needed like a hole in the head--military aid, I'm talking about. We figured as a matter of just common sense and policy, that some help might be desirable, and we'd try to do enough to keep the Soviets from getting too much influence. We worked out a package by which we said we would create an engineering regiment, I think it was, for them, which we would provide the military and civilian equipment for, and we figured that they could use this regiment to build roads and a few things like that which would be really useful to them. The Somalis wanted tanks and artillery and all sorts of things. They had essentially nothing in this respect.

I came back to the States and talked it over for a while, and we went and had a meeting, I think, in Bonn, for some reason or other, of the Germans and the French and maybe the British. I'm not sure whether the British were involved, but anyway, our Allies generally who were represented in Somalia. We agreed on this package, and then I recommended--this was perhaps undiplomatic on my part--that we instruct our charge, because I was not going right back, in presenting our program to say that this was based on the assumption that they would not get a large increased amount of military aid from anybody else, meaning the Soviets, and that if they did, we reserved the right to think this over. I felt this was desirable both from their point of view, but primarily from the point of view of presenting the matter to Congress. I felt that this would be a good selling point.

Well, I was later told by some of the Somalis that that's the worst thing we could have done, to make that condition, that gave ammunition to all the opponents of U.S. relations. Eventually, they did not accept this package, did turn to the Soviets about the time I left. The first thing the Soviets did was to take about 5,000 Somalis to the Soviet Union for training, and they trained them exceedingly well in NKVD-type operations.

Q: *NKVD is the same as the KGB, internal intelligence.*

TORBERT: Yes, internal control techniques, which they apparently learned exceedingly well, as

we later learned.

But that was towards the end. Meanwhile, we did a lot of constructive work. I traveled a great deal, I got to know a lot of them pretty well. I never could begin to speak Somali, but I spoke enough Italian to usually get along pretty well. Our Peace Corps was, I thought, very effective there, an effective tool, although we had to pull them all out at one point when there was a lot of border fighting, particularly up in the north. We had some oil exploration there, and I had various problems to solve in relation to the government. But generally, it was that kind of a problem.

We personally seized the opportunity to travel a bit around east Africa and went out as far as Madagascar and Mauritius, which was an education for us and gave us a feeling for the area. Of course, we covered Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya.

Q: *Speaking of Ethiopia, in your negotiations in consideration of arms, was there a problem of "localitis" on both sides, of you feeling that we've got to do more for the Somalis, our embassy and the desk back in Washington saying, "No, you can't because of Kagnew Station"?*

TORBERT: The scenario wasn't exactly like that, but certainly this was a consideration at all times, and it was a consideration that I think we in the embassy recognized. We always recognized that our interests in Ethiopia were far more important than they were in Somalia. In fact, I never was able to get even a military man at that time to give me a clear statement of what our concern in Somalia was, our national interest and security interests and so on. But we were aware of that.

At the same time, our argument always was that we should do everything we can within reason to keep up our interest and our friendship in Somalia, in spite of the fact that we were helping Ethiopia. Now, my counterpart in Ethiopia was a gentleman named Ed Korry, who later became somewhat better known as ambassador to Chile. I don't know where he is now. Ed was very bright. At first I quite liked him. He was a very bright fellow. He had talked his way into an embassy through the White House staff, most of whom became fed up with him as it turned out later. He was very, very insistent that he was in the most important place in Africa and his word should be a regional word, and we should stop paying any attention to Somalia whatever. He used to send in a three-page telegram about once a week saying this. We always put those telegrams in the drawer overnight to let our temperatures boil down, and then we put out a carefully worded reply. I later found, when I got back, that it was considered some of the best reading in not only the State Department, but in the White House, this semi-vitriolic exchange between me and Ed Korry. This is childish stuff.

Q: *At the same time, there were policy considerations and a very major one, and the repercussions are still here, and that was do you, because of one military base, put all your eggs in that particular basket, to the detriment of everything else, and this is still haunting us in the area. So it's not minor.*

TORBERT: I think probably I won that exchange to a degree. At least I developed a great deal of sympathy in the White House. Robert Komer was the White House National Security Council

man on Africa at that time. He was later ambassador to Turkey. He was also Secretary of the Navy at one time. He was a very positive guy, very much of a Democratic politician, too. He was always on my side after a few exchanges of these telegrams, so we got what we wanted pretty much. It was an interesting exercise in "localitis." I think the reason we were able to win was that we made our best effort to look as though we were being objective and looking at the big picture, whereas it was Korry that actually had a severe case of "localitis."

Q: *This is an unclassified interview, but did the CIA play any role there?*

TORBERT: We had one CIA man, maybe two at times. They had some role. I think they perhaps had a little money to spend and that sort of thing. I think I knew what was going on. I didn't object to it. Of course, I had a record with the CIA, so they probably told me a little more than they told some people. It wasn't a big thing.

Q: *It wasn't an intrusive operation?*

TORBERT: I wouldn't think so, no. There's no question we supported the existing government, and we did spend some money on things which we thought were quite justified in developing a democratic election structure, that sort of thing which you can argue about. We were certainly "Big Brother" in a lot of ways. But there were no serious incidents.

The day before I departed Somalia, we ran into a typical kind of a dirty tricks thing. There was an, obviously a Soviet-planted, alleged letter from a Peace Corps volunteer in Ethiopia who had traveled across Ethiopia and was supposed to be writing home and saying he had observed Somali troops and was going to help combat them. It was a pure fabrication. We were able to prove it eventually, but, of course, the Somalis didn't believe it. I spent all night practically, the night before I left, thrashing this out with the prime minister at what was alleged to be a pleasant farewell party for me, and I went off leaving Alex Johnpoll, who by that time was the number two and chargé for a while, I left him to cope with this.

I had two hours sleep, I think, got on the 5:00 a.m. plane for Rome, and in Rome, started organizing movements to disprove this thing. But the Somalis and all Africans were very suspicious. They were easy targets.

Q: *For this information.*

TORBERT: For this disinformation program.

DAVID D. NEWSOM
Director, Office for Northern African Affairs
Washington, DC (1962-1965)

Ambassador David D. Newsom was born in California in 1918. He received a

bachelor's degree from the University of California in 1938 and a master's degree from the Columbia University in 1940. He served overseas in the U.S. Navy from 1942-1946 and entered the Foreign Service in 1947. Ambassador Newsom's Foreign Service career included positions in Pakistan, Iraq, the United Kingdom, Libya, Indonesia, and the Philippines. He was interviewed on June 17, 1991 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: *You then left London to serve in Washington from 1962-65, first as deputy director of the Office for Northern African Affairs, as you mentioned earlier.*

NEWSOM: Correct. My boss was Bill Whitman. In 1963, I became the director of the Office until 1965. At that time, the Bureau embraced all of Africa except Egypt. Our Office covered Morocco, Mauritania, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia.

The other big issue in this time period was the Horn of Africa. Somalia became independent in 1960. There were growing tensions between Ethiopia and Somalia. The Soviets were beginning to show interest in Somalia. Our interests in Ethiopia, fostered by an Army communication station in Kagnew, Asmara, were in part derivative from an emotional US attachment to Ethiopia for sending some of their troops to Korea -- one of the few countries to do so. I spent a substantial amount of my time on Ethiopia. I worried at times about the Emperor's succession which was not a particularly popular issue especially with Haile Selassie. I spent endless hours trying to figure out solutions to reduce Somali-Ethiopian tensions. I looked at previous border agreements between Italy and Great Britain.

Q: *Were we in a position at the time of not being able to do something for Somalia because it would alienate Ethiopia and vice-versa?*

NEWSOM: That was the situation. Ethiopia did have priority because of the Army installation in Asmara. I think we polarized the situation to some degree. About 1965, a curious thing happened. We were assuming that Somalia would end up being a Soviet puppet and therefore we were giving increasingly greater support to Ethiopia. Jacob Malik, then the Soviet representative at the U.N., took a trip to Addis. At the time or soon thereafter, the Soviets gave the Ethiopians a $100 million dollar line of credit to build a hospital and a few other things. In retrospect, I now think that they were smarter than we were because they were hedging their bets in the Horn and not putting all their chips on one country.

Q: The big issue, of course, was East-West...we're talking about the Soviet Union, and Carter came in with the idea that maybe one could come to a better understanding with the Soviet Union. Am I correct on this?

NEWSOM: Yes. I think he felt confrontation was not going to gain anything. I wasn't there in the first year. The first year they had a major debate within the administration over what to do about Somalia, and whether to reinforce the Somalis to go to war with the Marxist Ethiopians. The State Department held out against that. That was the beginning of the division over policies toward the USSR. Brzezinski placed a lot of emphasis on the Soviet activities in the third world,

in Angola, Indochina, his 'arc of crisis' concept. We in the State Department tended to see these more as local issues exacerbated by Soviet intervention, but not necessarily part of a Soviet grand plan. We had some quiet negotiations with the Cubans, for example, over getting the Bay of Pigs prisoners released, and we were under strict admonition from Brzezinski that if the Cubans raised anything else, we were to raise the need for them to get their troops out of Angola. That precluded any wider discussions with the Cubans.

Q: Moving over to Africa, South Africa I suppose was something you've had to deal with.

NEWSOM: South Africa was an issue. You had the Rhodesian problem, the unilateral declaration of independence, and the Ian Smith government was in power at the time. That was something that Secretary Vance had a very great personal interest in, and I was not very much involved in the negotiations on Rhodesia which Vance handled primarily with Don McHenry, and directly with David Owen who was the British Foreign Secretary at the time. The main African issue that I became involved in was the question of Somalia and the Horn of Africa. Before I came in there had been a basic difference between the State Department and the White House over how to interpret, or how to deal with Somalia. By that time the Mengistu pro-communist regime was in power in Ethiopia. The Somalis had cut off their relations with the Soviet Union, and were looking for help from the west to invade the Ogaden area that had long been in dispute between Ethiopia and Somalia. Because there were Cuban troops helping the Ethiopians, the White House very much wanted us to see Somalia as a chosen instrument to harass the regime in Addis Ababa. The State Department, particularly the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Dick Moose, who I think was very pressured at the time, felt that Somalia was a morass, that we shouldn't get involved with. So there was a kind of stalemate through most of my time there over Somalia, but it was a matter of constant discussion.

ROY STACEY
Somalia Desk Officer, USAID
Washington, DC (1963-1965)

Mr. Stacey was raised in Hawaii and educated at the University of California and George Washington University. Joining USAID in 1963, he served first on the Somali desk in Washington and was subsequently assigned to Mogadishu as Assistant Program Officer. Continuing as an Africa specialist, Mr. Stacey served with USAID in Nairobi, Mbabane, Abidjan, Paris and Harare. From 1986 to 1988, he served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. Following retirement Mr. Stacey worked with the World Bank, also on Southern African Affairs. Mr. Stacey was interviewed by W. Haven North in1999.

Q: What year was that?

STACEY: That was 1963.

Q: And what was your first assignment?

STACEY: My first assignment was to the Somalia desk, because I had been slated to go to Mogadishu for my first assignment with AID. So I had a year on the Somali desk and then went over to Mogadishu from 1965-67.

Q: Did you have an orientation program?

STACEY: Yes, there was an orientation program. I worked in different parts of the African Bureau, aside from the Somali desk. I went to DP (Development Program Office) and worked for awhile; I worked in different parts of the African Bureau.

Q: What was you impression of the agency at that time?

STACEY: This was right at the beginning, and I was young and naive. While I was doing my graduate degree at George Washington, I had worked for a year in the Senate, for Senator Edward Long of Missouri. It certainly was long enough to convince me that I really didn't want to be part of the Legislative branch. I really found a lot of things that shocked me in the Senate, in terms of the inattention to detail or real issues. There was a great deal of self-interest in the Senator's office that really rubbed me wrong. So it was really very good when I had this opportunity to go to work with AID.

GORDON R. BEYER
Political Officer
Hargeysa (1964-1967)

Ambassador Gordon R. Beyer received a bachelor's degree from Harvard University and a master's degree from Northwestern University before entering the U.S. Marine Corps during the Korean War. Following his military service, Ambassador Beyer joined the Foreign Service. His career included positions in Thailand, Japan, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Horace G. Torbert in 1989.

Q: Do you want to paint a little picture of Hargeysa and what you did there--which was really the end of the world, I must say.

BEYER: Yes. In those days, it was quite hard to--it took about eight days to go by truck from Hargeysa to Mogadishu, and it was a fairly long plane ride because Somalia is in the form of a seven. You couldn't go directly because that was going across Ethiopia, and Ethiopia--in those days and, perhaps, until today--was the enemy. So the planes had to go around the corner, and that took quite a long time in these old prop planes--these DC-3s.

The post had been established in the sense that a house had been found, an office had been found,

and so a lot of the tough, basic decisions had already been taken and had been, I think, taken very well by a more senior officer who had done this. But there still were a lot of things to do in the sense that we didn't have furniture for either the house or the office, at that point.

I still remember Wayne Swedenburg, who was the administrative officer of the embassy in Mogadishu. I talked to Wayne and said, "What should we do about trying to get some things out of Washington for the office, in particular?"

We had gotten the desk and a credenza--a credenza is, I found out, something that you put against a wall. But we didn't have any couches, or chairs, or coffee tables, or rugs, or draperies.

So Wayne, being a very practical man, said, "Why don't you go to Aden, which was just across the Gulf of Aden, the town of Aden, buy what you need, have it shipped over?"

This was far and away the simplest, the quickest, and the cheapest. So I went over to Aden and went to a Norwegian store and bought some very nice things, had them shipped, and put in the office at Hargeysa. The furniture had a wine-red back of cloth and white leather seats, and then light wood on the arms. That was the two chairs and the couch. The table was also of light wood. The rug was gold, and the draperies were, again, wine red. I asked Molly, when this was all finished and set up, to come down and take a look at the office and see what she thought.

She opened the door, took one look, and said, "Metro-Goldwyn Mayer." [Laughter]

However, the Somalis were lively people, and they heard about this new office. For the next two weeks, I had a steady stream of Somalis coming into the office, for one reason or another, to take a look. [Laughter]

We also set up a library, and we showed films. So I was very much involved with our United States Information Service people in Mogadishu that first year because they would send us materials, and so on and so forth.

After that first year, we had assigned to us a wonderful USIS officer, who had been in London, named Savalas. He was the brother of--Telly. The Savalas who is on T.V. He did a marvelous job, and I realized what a good USIS officer can do, which I really hadn't been doing--but we tried. It was fun.

One other thing that we had to do in Hargeysa which was, I think, a little bit unusual is, the British at that time did not have relations with the Somali government. Therefore, we represented British interests.

Somaliland, which is what it was called--was a British protectorate before it became independent in the Somalia Republic and joining the south, which was an Italian colony. But many of the Somalis in the north had relations with the United Kingdom in one way or another. They were retired from the Somali Camel Corps, or they'd been in the maritime business and were receiving modest pensions or stipends of one sort or another. So one of our jobs every month was to pay

these folks these modest amounts of money. After we'd been there about six months, we got a communications from the U.K. government saying, "We understand that you are still paying a pension to the widow of this man who was a merchant seaman, and we figure that she must be about 102. We wonder, is she really alive and do you really give the money to her?"

Well, I had to write back and say, "No, we didn't give it to her. We gave it to her sons." Her sons were in their sixties and seventies. They were old men themselves. Then the word came back from London, "Well, we appreciate your problem, but you have to see her and see that she is still alive before you give out any more money."

So, when her son came in the next month to get his check, I said that I couldn't release it until he brought his mother in. He said, "Do you realize that my mother is a three-day walk into the Ogaden?"

This is a grazing area in, in fact, Ethiopia, but is inhabited by ethnic Somalis most of the time.

So I said, "I am terribly sorry, but those are my instructions from London, and I really have to follow them. I realize that this is difficult."

He said, "Do you have any idea how old she is?"

I said, "Yes, I think I do. I gather she is really quite elderly."

He said, "Yes. I don't know whether she can make the trip."

I said, "Well, those are my instructions."

So he disappeared, and he reappeared about a week later with a woman that he said was his mother, and I believed him. She certainly was the oldest-looking person I have ever seen. So I gave him the check and reported this back to London, and they said okay. [Laughter]

Q: Interesting. Now, at that time we had a Peace Corps, as I remember it. At least we had it for a while until there was some border trouble which came up. During your stay there, you had quite a few border troubles, didn't you, with Ethiopia?

BEYER: Yes. We had border troubles, but we also had ethnic troubles between the clans. The Habr Awal and the Habr Yunis got into a fight. These were two major Ishaaq clans, Ishaaq being the large clan overall. Two thousand men were killed. I couldn't believe that the Somalis could get in such a fight with themselves. It was just unbelievable to me.

At one point, a young man came in, who was a teacher, and showed me where he had been shot, and it had gone right through his pants cuff. There was just a little round hole.

I said, "Well, this is just silly."

He said yes, he realized that, but that it had just started and these things did happen from time to time. There was never any reporting in the Western press, to the best of my knowledge, on this kind of killing.

When we first arrived in Hargeysa, the Ethiopians had just bombed the town. The Somalis did not believe that the planes that were flown could have been flown by Ethiopians. The thought they were flown by Americans. We were, at that time, very close to Ethiopia and had been for many years. Haile Selassie, of course, was a legend in his time, and well and favorably remembered here in the United States.

I was really received with a certain coolness--indeed, more than coolness, perhaps some hostility. I can remember that the road from the airport into town had to go around a corner where young Somalis lounged at a local gas station and would always shout at the Americans as they went by, sometimes even throwing stones--which was a sort of Somali trait because that's the way they kept track of their herds. So they learned to throw stones very early.

Q: And there were plenty of stones available.

BEYER: That's right, because in Hargeysa--and, I guess, perhaps the rest of Somalia--it was like Arizona or New Mexico in the sense that it was quite dry. It only got five or six inches of rain a year. That usually came in the big rains in the spring. There were small rains in the fall. Then we'd go for as long as six months with no rain at all. The climate, however, was very nice and very healthy because of this lack of moisture.

So there was, for example, a large Peace Corps contingent in the northern regions because, of course, the Somalis in the northern regions, being a former British protectorate, the language of instruction in their schools was English. It was English rather than Somali because, in those days, Somali was not written. it was not a written language. It was just a spoken language. So English was used in the schools, and it was very easy, therefore, for our Peace Corps to be of assistance, teaching in their schools.

There was a doctor assigned, because of the number of Peace Corps folks that we had in the northern regions, but that doctor had really very little to do because, as I mentioned, the kids just didn't get sick because of the nature of the climate. It was a marvelous climate in the sense that, for three months of the year, it was cool enough to wear a jacket, and the summers, though warmer, were very dry. Therefore, you didn't feel the heat so much.

We had in the backyard in Hargeysa four horses, and so we did quite a bit of riding. There was also an institution called the Hargeysa Club, which was the old British Club in the northern regions. The Club had a place to stay, it served meals, and it had grade-B movies a couple of times a week. It was an interesting facility.

Q: I might mention, of course, that Hargeysa was about, as I recall it, 7,000 feet up in the air as opposed to Mogadishu which was at sea level. Therefore, the climate was quite different, indeed.

Didn't we have to, as I recall it, evacuate the Peace Corps while you were there?

BEYER: Not while I was there.

Q: I remember doing that at one point. Maybe it was before you came.

BEYER: Well, that's right. Right before when I came, the Peace Corps, the first group, they bombed Hargeysa. The Somalis were quite antagonistic to Americans. The volunteers in the northern region just scattered, and it was very hard to find where they were because the deputy director, who lived up in the northern regions, was not a consular officer, was not alert to keeping close track of his volunteers. So his volunteers just left the country and never told him where they were going.

So one of the purposes, I believe, of establishing this branch office of the embassy in Hargeysa was to be sort of a lightning rod for any hostility towards Americans so that they could be hostile towards this facility rather than at any particular volunteer.

Similarly, we had a somewhat better feeling for how to keep track of folks, and we did that. In addition, there were certain separatist feelings between the north, which was a former British protectorate, and the south, which was a former Italian colony. The northerners were beginning to feel that maybe they shouldn't have been so quick to jump into a republic with the folks from the south, because a lot of the money they felt they were earning for the government was going to Mogadishu and, therefore, leaving the northern regions and not coming back.

A couple of incidents that were interesting to me at that point--President Aden Abdullah Osman at one point came to Hargeysa. With the other consuls or vice consuls, we attended a dinner with him and had a long talk with him. I thought the embassy might be interested in this, and so I wrote a long telegram, which was classified, and took it down to the local--we had a one-time pad and classified it in that manner--took it down to the local post office, showed it to the telegraph man, and he said, "This is in code."

I said, "Yes, it is."

He said, "I won't send it."

I said, "You have to send it. It's a telegram. You just have to send it." [Laughter]

So he did send it. It got back to Washington, and they spent two or three days trying to decipher it, could not, cost $180, and a rocket came out to the Embassy saying, "Tell that consular officer in Hargeysa not to send anymore classified telegrams. If he's got anything classified, to send it to the embassy by pouch, and they can send it on to Washington."

This is what we did from then on.

Q: We were, I guess, pretty well cleaned up, up in Hargeysa. By this time, my contact with you

had a temporary break because I left Mogadishu, but you later came down to Mog as political officer.

BEYER: That's right, political officer.

Q: Do you have anything more to say about Hargeysa?

BEYER: Just two things. One is that Mohammad Egal, a former minister in the government--and to become a minister again, indeed, to become prime minister--was from the northern regions. We lived in a house of his first wife, and so we got to know Mohammad Egal quite well because he would come up and visit his children.

At one point, he told me--after he'd been up in Hargeysa for three weeks and we were drinking at the Hargeysa Club bar, which he enjoyed very much--he commented, "You know, you never really do get divorced from a wife."

So he still saw quite a bit of Asha, his first wife, and his children.

The other thing that I remember is, Ambassador Torbert--two things. One, when we first arrived, that little boy that was born, Tommy, you had us to lunch, and I remember we came--this is a very Foreign Service story. You had the whole family, including little Tom, and we had him in a crib, a portable crib. We whacked open that crib and dumped Tom in it. You were impressed by that. [Laughter] The other two kids behaved themselves, but this little guy, we just put aside and he slept.

The other thing that I remember is, at one point you were worried about the separatist business. We had left Hargeysa to take a boat, believe it or not, from Djibouti down to Mombasa as part of our R&R holiday. We had talked the Department into permitting us to do this rather than going to Athens, which was our R&R post, because we wanted to go to the game parks. We convinced them that this was a significant change in climate, etc.

As we came down in that Lloyd-Triestino Italian Line, we stopped in Mogadishu, outside in the ocean. People would come and join the boat and be lifted up in a bag. We were watching this operation and, at one point, the bag dropped, and there was Bill Sandals, who was the political officer and quite an impressive, older officer, quite proud of his dignity. Being hauled around in a bag, he didn't enjoy it at all [Laughter]. So I went running down.

I said, "For goodness sakes, Bill, what are you doing here?"

He said, "Well, the ambassador sent me out because he wants to know whether, in your view, there is any truth to these rumors that we're hearing down here about a separatist movement in the north."

I said, "Well, when I left the north--which was about two days before--things were still very quiet, and I didn't think there was anything to those rumors." [Laughter]

So he went down to the deck, and got back into his bag and went back ashore. I still remember that.

Q: The bag actually was a wooden platform with canvas sides that collapsed. That's the way I arrived in Mogadishu. My ambassadorial dignity was somewhat threatened. [Laughter]

BEYER: Well, it was the way everybody arrives. I didn't see why he should have been so upset. [Laughter] But he was.

At any rate, after you left, sir, Ambassador Thurston arrived. I was getting to be known in the embassy as an expert, just because I was bouncing around in the northern regions. So he asked that I come and replace his political officer after my two-year tour in Hargeysa, and so I did that.

Alex Johnpoll was the DCM when I went down, and I learned a great deal from Alex, also. He became a lifelong friend until he passed away. He was replaced by Hal Joseph, who was also a first-rate officer and a good tennis player. He and I used to play tennis.

Q: Very important there, too. That's one game you could play.

BEYER: Right.

Q: Do you remember anything particular from your Mogadishu days? What was going on by that time?

BEYER: I think the thing that I remember the best is what a democracy Somalia was in those days. They had elected a president twice and the parliament three times in open elections. Dalka was the political journal. It was in English and was the first, probably the best, political journal being published in Africa in those days.

I was at the embassy for a year. In the last days of that tour at the embassy, there was an election. President Mohammed [Ibrahim] Egal became prime minister, and Abdirashid Shermarke became the president. So there was a switch there.

Q: Abdirashid, having been prime minister before, then he was replaced by Abdirizak Haji Hussein, and then Egal replaced him.

BEYER: That's right, and then Egal replaced Abdirizak Haji Hussein.

Q: It seemed quite idyllic.

BEYER: Right. I remember Ambassador Thurston saying to me--we had a beach house at that point--"I want you to see Egal before you leave and find out what kind of government he's going to have and what he wants to do."

So I called Mohammed, and I said, "I'm leaving in a few days. I would be very grateful if I could talk with you, perhaps at the beach house."

He said, "Gordon, I'm really very busy. Well, all right."

So he came over about 4:30 to the beach house, and just the two of us talked for about an hour or two hours. I then reported this back to Ambassador Thurston, and his policies were very much what we hoped they would be. He became a very close friend to the United States, as did the Somali government, in those days.

Q: He shortly thereafter came on a visit to the United States, I remember.

BEYER: Right. By this time he had married a second time, Edna.

Q: The beautiful Edna, yes.

BEYER: Who was a lovely gal and a nurse. I remember the headline when he and Edna visited the United States. It said in the Style section of the Washington Post, "Second wife and midwife." It was an article about Edna. [Laughter]

Q: Well, perhaps our own bureaucracy has something to do with this.

BEYER: Yes, indeed. Actually, Ambassador Thurston was opposed to this policy. He used to call it "the policy of 'pays choisis'," the chosen countries. He said that there were some in Washington who didn't want to help Somalia but wanted to help Ethiopia. He felt that this was wrong, and that there were many reasons to help Somalia, let alone that it was an operating democracy in those days. I agreed with him.

But now, in retrospect, I really think that there are countries that we can help in the developing world. But there are also countries we can't help.

He said, "Well, you may not remember this, but a couple of years ago, when he first took power here and I came to the White House to work, I called you over to give me a brief--Beard was his last name--to give me a briefing on Somalia."

Tom Beard, I think it was. He was on the political side. He had raised money for President Carter and the Democratic Party.

He said, "I called you over because the Italians in New York were putting pressure on us to do something for Somalia. I called you over to talk about Somalia, and you did. You gave me a very good briefing on Somalia.

Vice Consul
Mogadishu (1965-1966)

Richard L. Jackson was born in New York in 1939. He received his Bachelor's Degree from Princeton University in 1962 and his Master's Degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1964. His career has included assignments in Mogadishu, Tripoli, Thessaloniki, Athens, Rabat and Casablanca. Mr. Jackson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on August 17, 1998.

Q: You served in Mogadishu from when to when?

JACKSON: I was there from 1965-66.

Q: What was the political/economic situation in Somalia?

JACKSON: Well, Somalia was then one of the great hopes in Africa; of course then there was tremendous optimism about Africa as a whole. There had been the great wave of African independence in 1960. There were people like Soapy Williams structuring Africa policy. The thinking was that with our resources and know-how, we could quickly pattern these countries after ourselves and that they would prosper in the democratic path. I think there was a vast underestimation of the problems involved in development, notwithstanding the theories, then current, about well-defined stages of economic growth. The AID bureaucracy and sheer numbers in the missions abroad, certainly in Somalia, was tremendous. Somalia was probably considered one of the most hopeful cases, although it's one of the poorest countries--and still is today--in Africa. Yet it was the only one that was considered a genuine nation, in the sense that it was one ethnic group, speaking one language, leaving aside that it overlaps areas of former French Somalia (Djibouti) and in the Ogaden area of Ethiopia, as well as vast areas of northern Kenya. Yet there was a feeling of tremendous optimism. I think people overestimated and romanticized the Somali democratic leaders. There was a charismatic, young prime minister, Abderrazak Hagi Hussein, who wore stylish white suits and was literally seen as a knight in white armor. There were, however, underlying problems of corruption and tribalism. Other issues were not well understood or, if known, were minimized and swept under the table, I think. It was an exciting place to be, in those years, which, after all, were only five years from Somali independence.

Q: I had served as an INR Officer for the Horn of Africa from 1960 to '61, I think. I didn't have that much, I mean Somalia was up for grabs and our whole policy revolved around, at that point anyway, maintaining Kagnew Station, which was in Eritrea, then part of Ethiopia. Somalia was considered almost an intruder if it screwed up our relations with Ethiopia. How did that play in Somalia when you were there some years later?

JACKSON: It's fair to say there was a very antagonistic relationship between U.S. Embassies in Somalia and Ethiopia. There was a political ambassador, Ed Korry, in Addis, who was tremendously aggressive in telling the Ethiopian story and stimulated lots of competition with Somalia. Somalia, of course, did not particularly count because of Kagnew Communications Station and the close U.S. relationship with Haile Selassie. Our eggs were in the Ethiopian

basket. Yet it was tremendously interesting to be in Somalia as they were attempting to shape their future in those years. The Somali, often described as the Irish of Africa, are a very engaging, physically beautiful people-- argumentative and frequently one may be exasperated with them, but they are, nevertheless, a very strong, handsome, and attractive people.

Q: Who was our Ambassador?

JACKSON: I had two while I was there. First, Tully Torbert, an excellent, old-line type of Ambassador, although we didn't have much of an overlap. For most of the time, it was Ray Thurston.

Q: How did he operate?

JACKSON: Ray was a very experienced diplomat. He had been burned somewhat as Ambassador to Haiti, I believe. He was the caricature of the unfortunate American Ambassador in one of the Graham Greene novels.

Q: "The Comedians" or something.

JACKSON: I think so. You couldn't utter Graham Greene's name in his presence. I liked Ray Thurston very much. I found him encouraging and interested in the young people in the embassy, as well as inclusive in terms of trips within Somalia. He was someone easy to stay up late with over a couple of drinks discussing where Somalia was going and clearly enjoying his time in what was undoubtedly a retirement post. I have to say, among all the other duties you get in your first post, I was the Post Language Officer. He instructed me to identify the best Italian teacher available for him, which I did. The lessons evidently progressed, and he subsequently left his wife and she her husband, although that was a scandal well after my time in Somalia.

Q: Talking about Somalia as the hope of the future, all I can think of is a parched area with bananas. And that's about it. I mean, what were we basing our hopes on?

JACKSON: I think the hopes for the future were political. The rest of Africa was seen as driven by tribal and linguistic conflict. This was the one country that truly existed as an ethnic nation. The Somali were also tremendously articulate. There were the beginnings of a democratic dialogue. There were rallies and political parties. The parliament was a very active place in those years. But basically you're right, economically, there was very little. Camels and sheep and goats, bananas, as you said, between the two rivers, the Juba and the Uebi Shebelle. Uranium existed in the interior, but not in quantities that made it worthwhile to transport. There was no infrastructure whatsoever. The Italians had run it as an exploitive colony and left almost nothing, although there was still considerable Italian cultural influence in the south, particularly Mogadishu, at that time which contributed to the atmosphere of the place.

Q: What about the situation there? You say basically they were a unified nation. Later, we're talking about the late 80's and early 90's, the whole place erupted into--if they weren't tribal disputes--sub-tribal vendettas. Were any of those rifts apparent at that time?

JACKSON: Yes, of course. Somalis are intensely confrontational, litigious, and they have a very careful system of checks and balances among the various tribes and subfactions. There were continual feuds, which were regulated sometimes with bloodshed, sometimes with exchange of camels. But I have to say we and the other nations have distorted that balance over the years by introducing modern weaponry and thus building up tribal elements around Mogadishu, the tribe of long-term strongman President Siad Barre. In my time, he was the Defense Minister. In saying that we have shifted the balance in Somalia, what I mean is that, prior to the Cold War era, the various competing tribal factions, analyzed by writers like John Drysdale and I.M. Lewis, were in approximate equilibrium in a very harsh survival environment with severely limited resources. With the Cold War, the Russians became strong in Somalia with military bases, particularly a major naval base at Berbera and enormous quantities of armaments. Then, with the fall of Haile Selassie, they switched sides and backed the Ethiopians, and Somalia became our client. We also put in weaponry, and all of that was very destabilizing. When I say Somalia was the only real nation on the continent, I think the rest of Africa conspired against them in its unwillingness, under the OAU Charter, to revise boundaries, because the Somali populations did overlap other countries and constituted a threat to the established order. They had an irredentist dispute with each of the other territories. The Somali flag is the five-pointed star, which represents the five areas considered to be Somali; only two of which--the former Italian Somaliland and former British Somaliland in the north--have ever been incorporated into Somalia.

Q: Did that intrude at all at the time you were there, that irredentist side of Somalia?

JACKSON: There was always low-level skirmishing in the Ogaden with the Ethiopians and in the Northern Frontier District, the NFD, in Kenya. There was an active Ogadeni Liberation Front. I think I was one of the first officers to speak Somali, and I recall meeting the legendary head of the Ogaden Liberation Front, Makhtal Dahir. He was a giant of a man with red henna hair, said to be able to eat a goat at one sitting.

Q: What was your impression of our AID Mission there?

JACKSON: They were very large. Very difficult for the small embassy economic staff, I think, to keep tabs on everything they were doing. On the other hand, they were wonderfully qualified professionals and very committed people, who were really trying to do their best in each of their sectors to bring this country along. I think the problem was not the people; the problem was with the Cold War confrontation with the Soviets that kept flip-flopping. There was a continual stop and start on the major projects. So there was never the consistency of development that, if followed to term, might have led to real development over ten or 15 years. That particularly applied to the showpiece projects that we became engaged in, like the Chisimaio (Kisimayu) deep water port or like NTEC, the National Teacher Education Center. None of those were ever seen properly through to completion, and that was true of many other projects in that country. That was political and direct from Washington, in my view, rather than related to the quality of the people, many of whom were badly disillusioned by this course of events, or of the management within the Mission.

Q: Did you have much contact with our embassy in Addis Ababa?

JACKSON: Personally I had none. Relations were seriously strained at the upper levels and there was very little communication. But I have to say, relative to my A-100 classmates, who went to bigger and so-called better posts, I'm sure I had the best of it. The rotational experience in a small country like Somalia was fantastic. By virtue of learning to speak Somali, I think I met most people in that country from the Prime Minister on down. They were remarkably open. The embassy at that time was quite encouraging and not protocol conscious in that respect.

My first assignment was head of the one-man consular section. The consular section, since there were very few Americans there and very few Somalis traveling to the United States, was almost entirely involved in protection of British interests, which was a large responsibility. The British had been asked to leave as a result of misunderstandings arising from Kenyan independence in 1963, which gave Somali-inhabited areas to the Kenyans. We were their protecting power. I had at my disposal a large Land Rover which had been left for the Vice Consul in charge of British interests for travel through the country. One focus was the work for the British War Graves Commission. We had a retired British Brigadier, based in Nairobi, who would inspect my work which sometimes involved reburials and regrouping regiments together. At one stage, he instructed us to bury a field piece that had become corroded and which he felt was an "insult to the Queen." That was a fair amount of work. We also had two shipwrecks of British- protected persons during my time. One, was a large dhow from Oman, where almost everybody drowned. The Captain landed in the water with his small son and his daughter. He swam a little bit, and later told me, when I interviewed him, that he left his daughter because he couldn't make it with both. He swam further and then left his son as well. The choices were automatic and he was proud to have survived and reached the shore, which made an impression on me because I think we Westerners probably would have all gone down together.

The other was a more interesting shipwreck. It was a large group of 80 or 100 British- protected persons who had been blown off course and across the Indian Ocean from the Maldive Islands. We worked for many months reporting to London via Washington to get those people finally repatriated, but it proved to be an expensive care-and-feeding operation.

Q: Did you go up to former British Somalia, to Hargeisa? Did we have a post there? Was there a difference there?

JACKSON: I frequently went up to Hargeisa. We had a small post there, now long closed. Gordon Beyer was the Consul. It was--yes--very different. It was higher, dryer territory and inland, compared to Mogadishu. There was also a much different atmosphere, as a result of the English language and British influence. An interesting place in those years. Sadly decimated by tribal fighting later.

Q: At that point, was the central government in Mogadishu trying to extend itself and brush aside the British influence?

JACKSON: There was a difference, and there were tribal rivalries, but the Prime Minister who

followed Abderrazak Hagi Hussein was from the North. He was also a very charismatic politician, Mohammad Egal, so there was an effort to knit the two parts of the country together, although the resources to do that were woefully absent. Some of the AID programs were intended to help in that respect.

Q: By the way, did you have children at this point?

JACKSON: We had one son. It was an ideal place to live, although there were recurrent bouts with fevers that could be somewhat frightening, as you would expect in that kind of place. The health facilities were very rudimentary. But it was a wonderful place, frankly, to live. The embassy had a half dozen very congenial couples of more or less similar age, and we had a lot of fun, and traveled frequently throughout the country. It was an unspoiled country in those years. You could take a lantern at night and simply pick up sufficient lobsters swimming to it to feed a picnic. I very much enjoyed those years. One always remembers the first post. It's perhaps the best.

ALAN HARDY
Economic Officer
Mogadishu (1965-1967)

Mr. Hardy served in the Army from 1957-1959. He joined the Foreign Service in 1956 His career included positions in Canada, Madagascar, Italy, Somalia, Hungary, Mexico, and an ambassadorship to Equatorial Guinea. Ambassador Hardy was interviewed by Lewis Hoffacker in 2001.

HARDY: From Milan to Somalia. I had mentioned earlier I was interested in Africa. After leaving Madagascar for Milan, I put in a bid to go back to Africa. My petition was answered and I was sent to Somalia as Economic Officer. I was thus entering my third functional area having put consular and administrative work behind me.

Some interesting human-interest kind of things about Somalia - I thought it was unique at the time, perhaps it isn't, but the Somalis have a way of greeting. The greeting is *"ma nabad ba,"* which means "Is it peace?" And the proper response is *"wa nabad"* which means "It is peace."

I always thought that came out of a tradition of tribal warfare. Somalis in their history have gone through a lot of internecine warfare. They still have that today; in fact, probably worse today than at any time. But perhaps because of that and in an attempt to overcome it or at least so you'd know whether to draw your sword or shake hands, you had this greeting. '*Ma nabad ba,'* is it peace, '*wa nabad,'* it is peace. I've always wondered if you said it is peace, if that forbade you from pulling a dagger out of your boot.

I liked the Somalis. They're very gregarious. They seemed to me very much like Americans because they're very individualistic.

During off-duty hours, we had built a golf course in Somalia. In fact, it was a 12-hole course and I personally supervised the building of many of the holes sitting on a bulldozer directing the operation. This whole thing, it later became the grounds of an American Embassy that was built out there. At the time, the Embassy was still in downtown Mogadishu

But, this golf course was a great place for the interchange of views, contacts, with the Somalis because a lot of Somalis love to play golf. That includes a fellow by the name of Mohamed Ibrahim Egal, who, I believe, is currently the Chief of State of northern Somalia, an area of British colonial heritage, which has managed to avoid the turmoil…

Q: They're off on their own. They've avoided all the turmoil which everybody identifies with Somalia, but which is basically in the old Italian area.

HARDY: British and Italian legacies. Here we've got a nice little, tight, functioning place of British heritage in the north, and the south is completely down the drain with everybody fighting with each other.

Q: I don't know if you can blame it on the Europeans or not.

HARDY: I don't know. Colonization didn't occur until the 19th century. Anyway, interesting place, and the golf course was very interesting. The greens were made of coral, with sand poured over them and then oil to give the sand a little bit of consistency.

Q: The green was not green.

HARDY: That's right. One of the lessons I picked up in Somalia was from a man by the name of Abdirazak. He was like a Somali Fidel Castro. He could go on and talk for hours. And he would exhort the people to economic development, he would exhort the people to political unity, and on and on and on.

Q: Was he a Commie?

HARDY: No, actually some said he might have been a paid agent of the U.S. Some said that. Anyway, that kind of approach was as futile with Abdirazak as I think it's been with so many other leaders who've gone that route. Talking that way and trying to get it all done, and exhorting, doesn't really work and it didn't work there. But watching it being tried in Somalia was my first direct encounter with a universal experience.

All Somali politics is basically tribal politics. It's really a quagmire for a political reporter. It's kind of a structured system based on tribal genealogies and it operates on maybe ten different levels of a pyramid. If at the point of a pyramid, you put the category of all Somalis, and the bottom of the pyramid, you put the smallest units, genealogical tribal units, you'd probably have eight or ten different levels. At each level, from clan to subtribe to tribe, to related tribes each, of the units is in conflict with the others at the same level, and they only unite against outside

people. That builds up all through the pyramid.

Even if you understand all that, if you try to explain in less than 50 pages, what's really going on, it's a very difficult task. I guess maybe the lesson there, in a place like that, is that all you can do is kind of stand aside, let what rises to the surface rise to the surface. This may also be true of Mexico (in a way), but you've got to concentrate on dealing with surfaces and not trying to invest anything much in any one person. Trying futilely to get informed enough that whatever comes up, you know in advance.

Sometimes, if it may have been true that we paid off one person or another, or got too close to one person or another, it hurt us in the long run. Because things could go topsy-turvy in an instant, as they did in a coup, perhaps five years or so after Abdirazak. By which time I'd left the country.

I was sitting in INR (Intelligence and Research) in Washington. I had written a report saying that there would be no coup. About two weeks later, here was this coup. I had been deceived by Somali individualism, and by my extensive, yet still superficial, knowledge of Somalia into thinking that they were democratic. Again the important thing for the U.S. is not to rely on being able to predict an eventuality but to know how to deal with it when it occurs which, however, did not make me feel any less chagrined about my report.

Anyway, this a time when we were playing both sides of the street. Really, our big interest in the area was Ethiopia. We had a listening post in Asmara that was very valuable in those days when technology was a little different than it is now. Our interest in Ethiopia greatly outweighed our interest in Somalia, and here we were trying to balance things, trying to achieve stability in the Horn of Africa where boundaries had never been truly accepted as shown on the map. Of course the Somalis knew exactly where our interests lay. Balancing was a tough job.

Q: This was before Eritrea split off.

HARDY: That's right. Because that's where Asmara is, in Eritrea.

Mogadishu was a fine career development post for me . I wound up being political officer for a while in Somalia. I think I was there, I'm not sure, perhaps it was more than two years. I was the second of two economic/commercial officers. We had a trade mission and so forth, trying to gin that country up a little bit economically. But I wound up being political officer, and I could see the feedback between the economic and the political.

Q: You had no problem with the Ambassador?

HARDY: No problem with our Ambassador in Somalia - well, I don't know why I should have. I did have a problem with the Ambassador, actually, or put better: he with me. We were coming up to this crucial election in which Mohammed Ibrahim Egal was running for Prime Minister of the whole country, the north and the south at the time, before they became divided, essentially, by tribal fighting in the last five or ten years.

Mohammed and I were good golf buddies, so I thought I would take advantage and invite him over to dinner and invite my Ambassador as well. Here I was a junior officer. And I had some other fairly important people that I had known from the golf course. So I got them all there, and meanwhile the Ambassador decides that because the vote's going to be in the next two or three days in the assembly, he can't be seen as being too close to Mohammed Ibrahim Egal, even though, especially because, that's his candidate. So he doesn't come to the dinner, and he calls me up about a half-hour before the dinner to say he isn't going to make it. He doesn't tell me why. Here I am sitting trying to entertain the future Prime Minister, who thought he was going to be sitting there chatting with the Ambassador. Even though we were friends, it was a little dicey. But, it was an amusing evening. I think we would probably have been a little bit better off just standing a little more aloof from things in Somalia, then as now. This incident occurred while I was still functioning as Commercial Officer. I should have known better but didn't partially because the Agency and the Ambassador were playing their cards close to their chest and not informing very many others in the Embassy about what was going on.

Q: Who was the biggest foreign influence there? Not the Italians…

HARDY: Well, the Italians still had a lot of influence because they were putting in more aid. Probably, if you had to say, we had as much influence as anybody, even then. Because, although Italy was probably putting in more money, we were a superpower.

Q: They loved Americans.

HARDY: And the Somalis, even though they knew we had a greater interest in Ethiopia, hoped that if they played ball with us, we'd at least keep the Ethiopians from going too far. There was a bitter border conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia. A large portion of Ethiopia is basically ethnic Somali, had been for centuries. Probably still is, unless somebody's purged it. So they were trying to use us as we were trying to use them. I don't think either of us was successful. Somalia and Ethiopia went to war at least a couple of times after that. Now Somalia is too weak to do anything. Ethiopia may be a little better off.

ROY STACEY
Assistant Program Officer, USAID
Mogadishu (1965-1967)

Mr. Stacey was raised in Hawaii and educated at the University of California and George Washington University. Joining USAID in 1963, he served first on the Somali desk in Washington and was subsequently assigned to Mogadishu as Assistant Program Officer. Continuing as an Africa specialist, Mr. Stacey served with USAID in Nairobi, Mbabane, Abidjan, Paris and Harare. From 1986 to 1988, he served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. Following retirement Mr. Stacey worked with the World Bank, also on Southern

African Affairs. Mr. Stacey was interviewed by W. Haven North in1999.

Q: After your year on the Somali desk, what happened?

STACEY: After the Somali desk, I went out to Mogadishu as the Assistant Program Officer.

Q: What was the situation in Somalia at that time?

STACEY: Ed Hogan was the Program Officer and Mabel Warnicki was the Deputy Program Officer and I was the Assistant Program Officer. The situation in Somalia in those days was very much one of Cold War politics. The single largest program was the Public Safety Program. We had eight Public Safety advisors there. We had a deep relationship with the Somali police.

Q: This was the largest program?

STACEY: Yes, and the Soviet Union had a very strong relationship with the Somali army, so the whole program there was very much oriented towards a sort of competitive advantage over our covert adversaries. There were perceptions that this Horn of Africa was a strategic interest for the U.S., given its geographic proximity to the Middle East.

Q: What were we doing in the police program?

STACEY: Teaching the Somali police to act as a counterbalance to the Somali army. That was the single largest program along with Kismayo Port, which was a port we were building in the south of the country, ostensibly for banana exports, to stimulate development of the inter-river region down there between the Juba and the Shebelle Rivers. In fact in looking through the files, it was clear that the port was undertaken for AID for some eventual strategic advantage that people in the Foreign Service establishment saw that Somalia might play in the Cold War.

Q: Did you work with the Somali's?

STACEY: Yes, we worked quite closely with the Somali's. I think that I had perhaps the most interesting project of the time, which was the project that I really got to manage, since I was the junior person in the mission, which was a rural school construction project that we were doing jointly with the Peace Corps. According to information that I had, it was one of the first joint AID/Peace Corps programs, because this was very early in the Peace Corp's existence.

Q: They usually didn't want to cooperate with AID in those days.

STACEY: That's right. There was a very strong injunction against it. What happened is they sent a couple of Peace Corp volunteers who were out there and had a little bit of background in architecture and had designed a very inexpensive schoolhouse, that could be constructed largely out of local materials, but it did require the importation of your roofing materials, window frames, cement, some paint. But I think the input content was maybe thirty percent. Local labor content was maybe fifty percent and then there was another twenty percent local costs. So we had

worked out a program where the Peace Corps would deal with designs, and AID would import pickup trucks, cement mixers that we would hook up on the back of pickup trucks, the cement and the imported materials. The Peace Corp. volunteers along with local villagers were supervising the self-help and the construction, so AID's role was largely the importation and signing off on the completed building. We built over 570 schoolhouses in two years.

Q: Five hundred? What's happened to them? Were they able to staff them?

STACEY: Yes, they were able to staff them and were able to build furniture and get the furniture out there, but to my knowledge most of them were destroyed during the war. As civil disorder spread in Somalia, anything that was an official building usually became a target of various groups. According to the information I have, most of the schools have been destroyed.

Q: Fascinating. I hadn't heard about that project. Was there any other project of note in your experience there?

STACEY: Yes. We had a major agricultural research institution in Baidoa that did a lot of work on improved varieties of sorghum and millet. It was one of the early breeding stations. I think it was Kansas State University that was implementing that project. While I don't have the proof of it, I'm sure that some of that research is today is being used in Somalia, because they're still largely sorghum producers in terms of agriculture. The other major project was a teacher training institute at Afgoi which was run by Eastern Michigan University. We trained a large number of Somali teachers. I think this institute was converted into other uses after the CFIA came to power. I think our single biggest failure that I can remember, aside from Kismayo Port, which had major problems. We had improper supervision on the construction of the port. This was supposed to have been done by the U.S. Corp of Engineers, but the Corp of Engineers wasn't really watching things that closely and neither was the AID engineer and as a result there was a lot of salt that got mixed into the cement. A few years down the road the port began to disintegrate, so AID later had to go in there and make costly repairs to this port. So to this day Kismayo Port is used very little.

Q: It wasn't used very much in those days?

STACEY: It wasn't used very much. They had gotten one banana boat a month, maybe two. It was largely for the export of bananas and grapefruit, which were being produced by Italian ex-patriots on large scale plantations. It was never really intended to benefit small farmers or ordinary Somalis. So that was certainly a failure. I can't imagine how or why we got into that port in the first place except for the reason I gave you earlier. There was also the famous Somali-American Fishing Company, SAFCO, which was a fish freezing plant that was built way up north on the Somali coast in a town called Alula. Pretty much at the end of the world out there. But SAFCO had been built largely on the recommendations of an American fisheries expert who had been in Somalia about seven years when I arrived. The guy's name was Scotty Napir. Scotty had written up great stories about the increased catches of fish that the Somali fishermen were recording, tuna, and all sorts of large fish. Based largely on the "fish" stories of this expert, the Somali's formed their own fishing company, the Somali Fishing Company. Then the Somali

Fishing Company approached AID for a joint loan. AID found a company in Massachusetts, Quincy Market and Cold Storage, which is now bankrupt- no longer in existence- and a joint project for SAFCO was done. After this fish plant was completed on this coast up in Alula, they started fishing and lo and behold, people discovered that there weren't a lot of fish around. Not the kinds they wanted at least. Further research apparently showed there had never been a large number of fish in those waters. Eventually the plant went bankrupt and was sold to Kuwaiti interests. I don't know if it's still in operation, but that project was a failure.

Q: We hadn't done an independent feasibility study I guess.

STACEY: No, the company did an independent feasibility study, but I have reason to believe that there were other interests in this project. There were certain parties in the U.S. government who wanted an observation post up on the north coast of Somalia in those days when that was a critical lifeline for all of the oil supplies going in.

Q: Were the Soviets there at the time and did you have contact with them at all?

STACEY: The Soviets were there and no, we didn't have much contact with them at all. They were building a big air base up in the north of Somalia. There was a real tension between the different communities in those days. The only importance of Somalia was its geography. There's really nothing there in terms of resources. This desolate place of less than two million people had become such a competition ground for the Cold War.

Q: It was really the front lines.

STACEY: Yes, and this was really surprising to me as a young AID officer, because I'd gone out there to do development and here was this major public safety program. It was ironic later on when the first democratically elected Prime Minister of Somalia, Muhammad Egal, was overthrown, the President of the country, who was more of a figurehead, was assassinated. It was ironic that the man, who pulled the trigger on this assassination had been trained by the USA Public Safety Program. He learned how to shoot a gun at our pistol range here in Washington, DC, and apparently he learned to shoot straight. It was ironic that the end of fledgling democracy in Somalia came from one of our trained public safety people.

Q: Was this a clan feud?

STACEY: Yes, largely a clan feud. In the days when we were there, Somali was an unwritten language still. All of our official work was done in Italian. We understood very, very little about these people, their clans, their social interrelationships, their feuds.

Q: Somalia was then viewed as a homogeneous country that didn't have all these complex tribal issues and therefore it was very promising, had a common language, etc. We missed something.

STACEY: That's right. It shows how we thought that because there was a common language and a common religion, that this was a homogeneous country. But when you looked below the

surface, it was much more fractious than that.

Q: How did you find working with the Somalis?

STACEY: At the time I found them quite interesting. I was struck by, in the midst of all their poverty, how proud they were. Matter of fact, they used to tell me that I had all these problems and worries of having come from the developed world. I had to worry about nuclear accidents; I had to worry about pollution and all kinds of things and I really couldn't go out like they could for two or three months at a time with their camels, sleep under the stars and drink camel's milk. I just couldn't appreciate this higher form of life that they had. So we had some wonderful discussions.

Q: I'm sure you did. Were there some who were sufficiently educated in English that you could communicate with?

Stacey: Oh, yes. You had a veneer of highly educated Somalis, some of whom had studied in the States. You had another group who had gotten their education in Italy. You know, under the Italian system even if you got a high school degree in those days you could call yourself a "doctore." So you had a lot of "doctores" in different positions. You could begin to see the differences between the kind of education they had in Italy, and some of the Somalis who had a U.S. education. We invested a great deal in the human resources in that country in those days. The number of participants who were trained was substantial. Who knows where those people are. I doubt that very few of them are still in the country. I suspect most of them with any kind of an advanced education had to leave the country in order to survive.

Q: Did you have a sense of the Cold War going on?

STACEY: We had a sense of it only in the sense that it was clear that the Public Safety program, our work with the police, had a very, very high priority. It was also clear in some of the areas of the country where we were restricted from going to because there was Soviet military presence. I went off on a safari one day with one of my colleagues and we accidentally wandered into one of the areas where there were some Russian tanks, Somalis were being trained on Russian tanks. We barely escaped with our lives. They stopped us and stripped us and made us lay down on the ground in the hot sun.

Q: These were the Russians?

STACEY: No, these were the Somalis. They accused us of being spies, because we had binoculars, we had cameras. That's what you normally take on safari, so they said we were spies. We were getting pretty badly sunburned lying out there in the sun as I recall, and fortunately a Somali officer came along who had been trained at Sandhurst. We convinced him that we were innocent and he told us to get the heck out of there. We were most happy to do so.

Q: How did you find the conditions in the country? You traveled around in it quite a bit I guess.

STACEY: You had this contrast of what we would call extreme poverty, and yet in those days Somalia was at peace. Those who were practicing pastoralism had a relatively consistent source of food and they had their herds, and they had their grazing patterns, which were uninterrupted. Those who were cultivating the river valley there was water, and they could cultivate. Education was needed and healthcare was needed, but again it looked promising. It looked like there were some opportunities for some slow but not spectacular growth. What we didn't understand was the depth of the political problems, which later resulted in Said Bari coming to power. As you recall this was after I had left there. We continued (the U.S.) to support Said Bari again for reasons of Cold War strategic location. During the time that Said Bari was in power, the civil society was sort of systematically destroyed. Farmers cooperatives, herders groups, things like that which existed - the kinds of elements of social interaction that can absorb conflict- were systematically destroyed by Said Bari.

Q: What were his motives, power and control?

STACEY: Power. Of course, when Said Bari was finally overthrown, the result was now a country that split into many different pieces with the so called war lords and so on. It really has reverted to a government structure that is almost medieval right now. It's very sad.

Q: Anything else on Somalia?

STACEY: No, that's about all of it that I can think of right now.

Q*: That's interesting. How long were you there?*

STACEY: I was there until 1967.

Q: You were there quite a while I guess.

STACEY: Yes, 1965-1967. I remember I left on the day that the Arab-Israeli War started in 1967. I did a little bit of short-term work then with the East African community office which was in Nairobi. I do recall that this was about the time that the Korry report was published, which had as an intention to limit all bi-lateral programs to ten in all of Africa. So it appeared that Somalia would not be one of those 10 countries at that point, and we wanted to put greater emphasis on what we could achieve through the East African community and through the East Africa regional program.

Q: Part of the Korry report was to emphasize regional programs?

STACEY: Right. To emphasize regional. I do think there that looking back I don't have a lot of observations on the program with the East Africa community, but I think it was a missed opportunity. Our approach to the East Africa community was very technical. We were doing things with seed sterilization and all kinds of things with livestock and veterinary control. It assumed that the political consensus on the institutions was there. The political consensus wasn't there. Our diplomats and our ambassadors had no major political interest in the East African

community, so it seemed like our whole approach to it was technical. We didn't have a political strategy. If we had a political strategy we would have recognized that one of the things that has enabled Europe to get to progress has been the compensatory mechanisms which made sure that poorer countries like Portugal and Greece would come along with the rest. Of course that is what was missing in the East African community, with most of the growth and economic activity going to Kenya. If we had more of a political approach and more of a political strategy, I think that maybe we could have preserved more of that regional program in that period. It looked like such a wonderful opportunity at the time.

Q: But your work was mostly with the technical?

STACEY: Yes, I was really doing program work. This was just a short-term assignment before I came back to Washington in 1968.

GILBERT D. KULICK
Political Officer
Mogadishu (1966-1968)

Gilbert D. Kulick was born in Connecticut in 1942. He attended the University of Texas and graduated from there in 1963. He earned his M.A. from UCLA in 1965. In 1966 he joined the Foreign Service. His posting included Mogadishu, Addis Ababa, Tel Aviv, and Washington D.C. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy on January 29, 1993.

KULICK: Somalia was a unique country in Africa, in many ways. Unlike any other country in Africa it had pretty much of a homogeneous population, at least from the linguistic and religious point of view. It was also fairly homogeneous from an ethnic point of view, although there were some differences between the so-called Hamitic, nomadic peoples of the North and the more settled, agricultural people of the South who were of more conventional, African stock. There was a lot of prejudice by the Hamitic northerners against the so-called "Bantu" people [of the South]. They really weren't really "Bantus." That's a linguistic term. They were "black Africans." But they were all Somalis. They all spoke Somali. There was no real, essential cultural difference between them. They had a rough and ready kind of democracy. They had a parliament, real elections, and real debate. Indeed, there was actually a political change in the government while I was there--not a change of party. One prime minister left and another one was voted in. The next time that there was a peaceful change of government in Africa was in Zambia in 1991.

The Somalis prided themselves--and we in the Embassy reflected that--on the perception that Somalia was a real democracy and that it was going to avoid all of the tribalism, corruption, and other blemishes on democracy that were already apparent in the modern history of other countries of Africa. These shortcomings were beginning to show up. The Nigerian civil war was about to begin--indeed, had already taken place at that point. Zaire--then the Congo--was already falling apart and is again falling apart. But Somalia seemed to have the necessary elements to make it.

This is now 1993. As we have seen, this was an illusion.

Q: *We now have U. S. troops, along with those from other members of the United Nations, trying to keep Somalia together.*

KULICK: Perhaps better said, "trying to put Somalia back together," as the country has almost totally disintegrated.

Q: *As you were saying, there is this view within the Foreign Service that, when you are assigned to a country, you like to think that it is kind of a "winner."*

KULICK: Yes.

Q: *And Somalia seemed to be a "winner."*

KULICK: Well, it certainly seemed so at the time. I must say, in very idiosyncratic terms. It was not a place that anybody held up as a paragon of the way Africa should be, simply because it was different. They spoke Italian there. Where else in Africa except for Eritrea did people speak Italian? So it didn't fit into the conventional mode that we have of being a part of British or French or Portuguese colonial history. The Somalis were still a little bit ambivalent about whether they were Africans. To an American they looked like Africans, like other Africans. But those who know the region can very readily recognize a Somali Arab, even from a highland Ethiopian, much less by comparison with so-called "Negro" Africans from the southern and western part of the continent. They were all Muslims--not terribly devout, on the whole. But they had kind of a schizophrenic picture of themselves, betwixt and between the Arab world and Africa.

I found them thoroughly engaging people. They were very irreverent and very democratic, in the sense that they did not have much regard for hierarchical rank or for pretensions among politicians. There were no real social classes. That was characteristic of a nomadic society. Everyone in Somalia has a nickname because two-thirds of the people in the country are named either Mohammed or Ali or Achmad. So they have to have some other way of distinguishing among themselves. They tended to single out physical characteristics or personality characteristics, usually very negative ones. You might have a politician whose name was "Zuppo," for example, which I think means "lame" in Italian, because he dragged one leg. If a man had a broad nose, they'd call him "Flat Nose" or "Cross Eyes" or "Big Mouth." In fact, Siad Barre, who, at the time I was there, was the Army commander. In 1969 he led a coup d'etat and, for the next 22 years, was the military dictator of Somalia. He was universally known among Somalis as "Aphuain", which means "Big Mouth." That's what they called him. I don't know whether it referred to his loquacity or just that he happened to have a large, oral aperture. To an American this was a kind of appealing, national personality characteristic.

I used to contrast this with the situation in Ethiopia, which was very different. The Ethiopians are very formal, very proper, very deferential, and very polite and soft-spoken--extremely conscious of social class. They are very--what's the word? "Devious" sounds too sinister but they are very

convoluted in their speech. You had to read between the lines to understand what they were saying. By contrast, the Somalis were very straightforward. They told you exactly what they thought. I mentioned Ethiopia because that was my next assignment.

I was the junior officer in the Embassy [in Mogadishu] and I did a little bit of everything. As the youngest officer they tried to get me to follow student affairs, although there was no university, and it was a little hard to do that. However, I used the fact that I had worked for the National Students Association, which at that time was still known among African students as a very liberal force in the United States, as a way of kind of ingratiating myself with young people. This was on the somewhat naive assumption that they knew or cared anything about American politics or that they made those kinds of distinctions. I experienced a period of near panic in February, 1967, when I was listening to the Voice of America one morning, over my cornflakes. I heard the announcer state that the National Students Association had revealed that for the previous 20 or 25 years it had been subsidized by the Central Intelligence Agency. Of course, this caused a great brouhaha back in the U.S. for days, because it turned out to be the kind of loose thread that, when pulled, unraveled the whole skein of other ventures by the Agency. It turned out that they were subsidizing labor unions and youth and cultural organizations. They had this whole, elaborate series of international operations that they were secretly funding. It was not all as malign as it was made out to be. In a lot of areas it was simply providing funding that was not available from private sources for organizations which they felt would assist us in our world-wide cultural and political confrontation with the Soviets. It created a great scandal in the U.S.

Anyhow, it turned out that, just as I had exaggerated the effect of my having played this up before, the Somalis seemed equally indifferent to the fact, later on, that it had all turned out to be an elaborate CIA operation. But that was a moment of real fright for me during the first three months of my diplomatic career.

Q: *What was the feeling at that time about the "Soviet threat," because this was a theme that ran through an awful lot of our African policy. In Somalia from 1966-68, when you were there, how did people view the Soviets?*

KULICK: The Somalis were playing the East-West game very actively. This was, perhaps, epitomized by the fact that the Somali Army was receiving training from the Soviets, while the National Police force was under the tutelage of what was then West Germany [the Federal Republic of Germany]. We used to joke about what would happen when the confrontation came. Would "our" police be able to whip "their" army? The Somalis didn't take any of this very seriously, on an ideological level. They simply saw this situation as a way of maximizing their bargaining position to obtain aid.

We had quite a sizeable AID mission then. I think that there were probably 30 or 35 Americans. I don't remember what the dollar amount of the aid was, but it was not insignificant. We had a large agricultural training program in a town called Afgoy outside Mogadishu, we contributed to the police training program, and there was a certain amount of public works assistance.

The Russians had a larger presence there because of their role in training the military. I should

say not only the Russians, but the Chinese. I don't think that there were North Koreans there, but there was a large Chinese contingent handling grass roots projects. They built an assembly hall, a convention hall where all national rallies took place. Of course, in 1967-68 China was still totally off limits to the United States. We were not supposed to have anything to do with the Chinese there. This was still when we were fighting a rear guard action to keep Communist China out of the United Nations, when they were seen as the "Yellow Peril." I should say that this was before the Chinese Communists abandoned any real effort to proselytize or fight the Cold War. They were out there competing, both against us and against the Soviets.

There was a funny little vignette here. Every two years there was a major trade fair in Mogadishu. All of the countries with which Somalia had diplomatic relations had pavilions there, displayed their wares, and had cultural displays and so forth. As it turned out, the American Pavilion was right in the center of the fairgrounds, directly facing, nose to nose, the Chinese Pavilion. They were about 20 yards apart. American Embassy officers were assigned, on a rotation basis, to work in the American Pavilion as resource people, as guides through the exposition, and so forth. I had the duty one evening--it was very quiet and there were very few people in the pavilion. I was standing at the entrance to the pavilion, looking across this open area or parade ground at the Chinese Pavilion. You could look through the entrance and see a statue of Mao Zedong, about eight feet high, brilliantly lit, with a crimson background behind it. It was very alluring to me. I was really fascinated and drawn to see what was going on in there. When my relief arrived at the American Pavilion, I very casually strolled across this open ground and went into the Chinese Pavilion. I walked around, looking at the various exhibits. It was like tasting forbidden fruit--a 16 year old kid going into a burlesque house. [Laughter] That was the feeling I had, a very exotic, tantalizing taste of the unknown. I walked around, viewing the various exhibits.

As I neared the entrance, there was a table piled high with copies of Mao's "Little Red Book," the sayings of Chairman Mao. Even at the time these were kind of banal cliches with which Mao exhorted his people. But in 1967 Mao was at the zenith of his power and had the entire 600 million Chinese in his thrall, memorizing his thoughts. Actually, it was called, "The Thoughts of Chairman Mao." The sayings were rather pretentious. Anyhow, I thought what a gas it would be to pick up one of these books and have it around my office. I reached out to take a copy of the book. I felt this hand come down and stop me. I turned around, and there was a Chinese guy. He looked at me and said, "Where are you from?" I guess that they had orders just like us, to stay away from the Americans. I looked up and said, "Oh, I'm from Egypt." He said, "Oh, all right. I thought that you were an American." I said, "No, no, my name is Mustafa. I'm from the Egyptian Embassy." This was the first name I came up with. So we got into a conversation. I was, sweating bullets. You sweat there even when you're not nervous. I managed to persuade the guy, although in retrospect I don't know how that was possible. Mogadishu was a small town and people knew each other. But I think that this guy was not from the Chinese Embassy. He was from Beijing, or Peking, as it was known then.

Anyhow, the amusing part of the story is that, as I worked my way out of that and left the Chinese Pavilion, a young Somali came up to me and started speaking to me in Arabic. Well, I don't know Arabic but I recognized the language. It was clear that he had overheard me, thought I was Egyptian, and wanted to practice his Arabic on me. I must say, I was much more

quick-witted in those days than I am now. I very quickly said to him, in Somali, "Oh, please, since I'm in your country, I would rather speak Somali. I am learning your language. I can speak my language any time." I'd been studying Somali.

But he persisted in wanting to speak Arabic. I said, "No, no, we must speak Somali." I managed to extricate myself after I had this brief, painful conversation in Somali. During the rest of the time I was in Mogadishu, I kept running into this guy on the street. He would call out to me, "Mustafa, Mustafa." I was deathly afraid that he would see me one day walking with the DCM or someone from the Embassy and have to explain. But my luck held, and it never happened. As the attentive listener will begin to perceive, I was a rather brash young Foreign Service Officer.

Q: *But this, of course, is some of the fun of the Foreign Service. You're allowed to be brash in a lot of places.*

KULICK: We had a very traditional Ambassador and DCM, and I don't think that they would have appreciated these antics if they had known about them at all.

Q: *Could you talk a little about your first Ambassador and DCM and how you got along with them. This was your first Embassy. How was it run? The Ambassador was Raymond Thurston.*

KULICK: The Ambassador was Raymond Thurston. I'm not sure how old he was at that time. He was completely white-haired, though, and very distinguished looking. He loved to have people tell him that he looked like Spencer Tracy, which, in fact, he did, to some extent. He was a fairly superficial person, I think. Well, I won't get into personalities too much. I lived right next door to the DCM. He was a fairly dour, relatively humorless person. He's still living around Washington, so I won't give you his name. Ambassador Thurston has since died. I think that they saw me as kind of brash and in need of some seasoning, fairly quickly, which is why they gave me these lousy jobs to do. As I mentioned, my first assignment was in AID for three months. The job involved basically collating statistics of one sort or other. Then I came over to work in the Economic Section of the Embassy for another three months, doing WTDRs (World Trade Directory Reports), which are sort of real "scut work" in an Embassy. People [in the U. S.] would be interested in importing from some company or exporting to it and would inquire of the State Department about the company. We would go out and do a report on the bona fides of the company. But in retrospect all of this looks much more interesting and useful than it appeared at the time. I wanted to be a political officer, I wanted to start doing political work right away.

I was so young and I looked even younger, so people often took me for a Peace Corps Volunteer. In fact, I felt much more at home with the Peace Corps Volunteers than I did with other Embassy officers. But the Peace Corps Volunteers were instructed not to hang around with Embassy people for the opposite reasons. They didn't want any confusion among Somalis and wanted to make sure that the Somalis understood that the Peace Corps didn't work for the Embassy and therefore the Peace Corps Volunteers were not Embassy "agents." They were agents of the U. S. Government but they weren't there to gather intelligence.

Then I did a six-month stint as consular officer, which, as it turned out, was probably the most

interesting work I did while I was there. This was because, at a small post, one consular officer did everything--visa work, citizenship, and passports. In addition to that I had the rather grandiloquent title of "Officer in Charge of British Interests," because the U.S. was the "protecting power" for the U. K. [United Kingdom] in Somalia at that time. This arrangement was made about in 1964, after Somalia broke diplomatic relations with the U.K. The British, for reasons which no one has ever explained to me, had held a referendum in the northeastern province or Northern Frontier District of Kenya, as a part of preparing that country for independence. About 80 or 85% of the population of this area was composed of ethnic Somalis. The referendum was held there to see whether [the people wanted to be part of Kenya]. Somalia already claimed all of the Somali speaking areas adjacent to it. To no one's surprise the people voted overwhelmingly in favor of separating from Kenya and joining Somalia. Whereupon the British said, in effect, "Thank you very much. Kenya will get its independence in December, 1964, and the area in question will be part of Kenya." Not surprisingly, the Somalis took great exception to this. Some day I've got to find out why the British did this, because obviously they had no intention of honoring the wishes of the [Somali-speaking] residents [of the Northern Frontier District]. Anyhow, at that point the Somalis broke diplomatic relations with the British, and the U.S. became the protecting power.

This meant that we took over protection of the welfare of British subjects and British Protected Persons, as well as the properties of the British Mission there. So, this meant for me that I got the British Ambassador's Land Rover, complete with his driver, who picked me up at home every morning. I was probably the only junior officer in all of Africa who had his own car and driver. I also "liberated" the piano from the British Ambassador's residence, which was going to rack and ruin there in the tropical heat. I had it moved for safekeeping to my living room. There was a British War Graves Cemetery and a British Council Library filled with termite bait. We finally liquidated the library because it was being consumed by termites. Substantively, this additional assignment meant that I handled all of Britain's consular interests throughout Somalia. I guess the Embassy also handled British political interests, but this was done at a higher, political level.

I had all sorts of interesting cases: shipwrecked sailors from the Maldive Islands who washed up on the beach in Somalia and had to be repatriated to the Maldives. Temporarily, we set up a tent camp for them. This was particularly memorable. In fact, I've just written it up for THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL. It will be in the next issue coming out next week. I'm not sure how much this...

Q: *I think that this is very important to give us an idea of what we were doing [in Somalia at that time]*.

KULICK: One Friday, I think, which was our day off--the Muslim Sabbath--I was down at our beach club, which is where we all went when we had any free time. There was, in fact, a great deal of free time because the Embassy only worked from 7:00 AM to 2:00 PM--we had the rest of the day off. I got a call from the Embassy Duty Officer saying that they had had a call from the Police or someone who reported that a British ship had been caught, violating Somali territorial waters, and had been brought into the port of Mogadishu under guard. The captain of the ship was demanding to see his consul--and that was me.

So I went down to the port to the port captain's office. There, sitting before me, was the commander of the Somali Army, Gen Mohammed Siad Barre, the commander of the Somali Navy, and the captain of the port. They were grilling this hapless, British captain, who had been on his way to Aden with a cargo of potatoes for the then British garrison there. Aden was the site of a considerable guerrilla war, with the British garrison trying to control the unrest. The British left Aden a couple of years later, but it was a major problem at the time. The ship's cargo of potatoes was a major part of British Army rations at the time, I gather. The Somalis were convinced that this British ship was the advance guard of the long-anticipated British invasion of Somalia. Describing the Somalis as ethnocentric and xenophobic greatly understates their obsession with their own importance. They were absolutely convinced that there were British submarines offshore, ready to send waves of Marines onto the beaches. Why they thought that a potato-carrying ship would be the vanguard of such a force, I don't know. The British ship captain just wanted to get out of Somalia and continue on his way to Aden. Over a two-day period they grilled the captain. I don't mean that they tortured him, but they kept trying to get information out of him. I was valiantly trying to play the role of a diplomat or consul and to convince them that there was nothing sinister in all of that. He had just happened to get too close to shore. He said that, in fact, he had not been in their territorial waters. The upshot of this affair was that, over a two-day period the cargo on the ship deteriorated very rapidly in the baking, tropical sun. When they finally decided to let the ship go, the captain said that the cargo had deteriorated too far and would never make it to Aden in edible condition, so they dumped all of the potatoes on the quay in the port of Mogadishu.

It turned out, quite by coincidence, that there had been a shortage of potatoes on the local market for the preceding two months. They didn't grow potatoes in Somalia, and the whole supply depended on a ship that came from Italy every two months. The total supply was not very large, because it was mostly expatriates who ate potatoes, not Somalis. On the local expatriate cocktail circuit, that was the subject of minor grumbling. We had pasta but no potatoes. When the word got out that there was a load of potatoes which had just been dumped in the port, every houseboy and market woman in town descended on the port and scooped up the potatoes. For the next week all of us expatriates gorged ourselves on potatoes, because they had to be eaten fairly quickly. The potatoes were just about rotten. I call that "The Great Mogadishu Potato Caper." This affair is illustrative of the level of pettiness that diplomatic or consular work in out of the way, provincial places like that can entail. We didn't have any really major issues with the Somalis.

Q: *Oh, there was the Mau-Mau issue and the Ogaden question.*

KULICK: No, the situation was pretty quiet. [Emperor] Haile Selassie was still well entrenched on his throne [in Ethiopia]. There were little border skirmishes from time to time, and, of course, the Somalis had asserted their claim, not only to the Ogaden area but to the northern frontier area of Kenya, which I referred to before, and to Djibouti as well, which was then known as French Somaliland. In fact, the five points on the star at the center of the Somali flag were said to represent the five segments of the Somali homeland, which had been divided up. There were the three that I just mentioned [The Ogaden, the northern frontier area of Kenya, and Djibouti], plus

Italian Somaliland and British Somaliland, which were merged together in 1960 when Somalia became an independent country. Written right into their constitution was the goal of reuniting into one country the five territories represented on the star. But they were in no position to press their claims because they were much weaker, militarily, than Ethiopia--or even Kenya. At that point the Somali Army only had about 8,000 troops. It was quite small--a far cry from the 100,000 man Army they ended up with after having successfully manipulated the Americans and the Russians into arming them to the teeth. But when I was there, the Somalis were no real threat. We had no particularly controversial matters at issue between us. Our Embassy in Mogadishu, I suspect, was typical of the way most American Embassies functioned in Africa at that time. We were concentrating on helping them with economic development and keeping an eye on the Russians and the Chinese, trying to make sure that they didn't get the upper hand.

The Somalis had no ideological affinity with the Russians or the Chinese at all. They were much too anarchic to be attracted to a centralized, political philosophy. They seemed to have a kind of indigenous, democratic tradition. We felt fairly good about the situation, even though the Russians were supplying the Army. In Cold War terms we were certainly at least even with the Soviets. Where it really counted, in the hearts and minds of the people, we were in a stronger position.

I guess that the only real political strain--and it was significant--occurred over the 1967 Middle East War, which took place about six months after I arrived there.

Q: *The 1967 War was between...*

KULICK: The June, 1967, War...

Q: *Israel, Syria, and Egypt.*

KULICK: Even if people look at this tape 50 years from now, I'm sure that they will recognize that event. That was the major conflict which occurred when Israel took on three Arab countries [Egypt, Syria, and Jordan], thoroughly defeated them all, and conquered the Sinai area, the West Bank [of the Jordan], the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights. The Somalis were not, at that point, members of the Arab League. They formally joined the League several years later. However, it was a 100% Muslim country, right on the periphery of the Middle East. It had very strong pro-Arab and anti-Israeli feelings. When the [1967] War broke out, there were several demonstrations--I think that they were fairly spontaneous--against the American Embassy, because we were seen as Israel's great protector, although we had not intervened [in the fighting] at all. It was all over before we ever had a chance or there was any need to intervene. But for a period of six or seven days we were fairly worried. If the war had gone on for much longer, this anti-Israel sentiment could well have jeopardized the American Embassy. We were "locked down" during that time. We were told to stay home and not move around town. I remember one demonstration--again, typical of the kind of "Mickey Mouse" quality of the place. In Syria they burned down and ransacked the Consulate. In Somalia the demonstrators were throwing rubber "Zoris" at the American Embassy.

Q: *A "Zori" is a...?*

KULICK: Thonged rubber sandals that everybody wore. That suggests the virulence with which they demonstrated. In short, it wasn't very serious. They were just going through the motions, I think. But in fact the government felt the need to make some kind of demonstration of loyalty to the Arab cause. In the Friday edition [equivalent of a Sunday edition in the U. S.] of the local, weekly English language paper there was a headline across the top of the [front] page that said, "Somalia to Send Troods to War." The headline said "Troods" instead of "Troops." This was in large type, I might add--I'm holding my fingers about 2 ½ inches apart. That, to me, captured the essence of the place. They huffed and puffed and came out with these ludicrous kinds of pronouncements. Fortunately, the war was over before they could get their "troods" launched. They were going to send some sort of token force, but the Israelis spared them the need to do that.

I recall that one person in the expatriate, American community was actually an unmarried Jewish man from Aden who had lived in Somalia for many years. He ran the Mobil Oil operation there. I'd gotten to know him. I guess that I hadn't publicized the fact that I'd lived in Israel for a year and spoke Hebrew and so forth. I remember Max getting in touch with me and asking me whether, if the balloon went up, we would take care of him. He was widely assumed to be an Israeli spy--and probably was. We were listening to short wave radio broadcasts from Israel, following the course of the war, on a day by day basis. At the beginning, of course...

Q: *It looked bad.*

KULICK: It looked very bad. Here were the huge Egyptian, Jordanian, and Syrian Armies poised on the borders of Israel, ready to attack. But within 48 hours, as we listened to foreign broadcasts, things changed. The Somali Radio, of course, was picking up broadcasts out of Cairo, which were still talking about glorious, Egyptian victories.

Q: *They were also talking about American airplanes [allegedly] attacking [Egyptian aircraft], which was a complete fabrication.*

KULICK: It was a very tense period for three or four days. I remember wondering if we were going to have to be evacuated, because, of course, all of our Missions in the Arab world were shut down. Suddenly, there was a great glut of State Department Arabists on the [jobs] market [in the Foreign Service]. For years thereafter there were Arabists walking the halls [of the State Department]. I don't remember the figure, but we had 10 or 12 Embassies closed down. In fact, one of the evacuees came to Mogadishu. I don't remember what they gave him to do. There wasn't that much work to do, but [the Department] had to find places for these people. That [the 1967 War] put a strain on our relations with the Somalis for a while. But, again, they were pretty cynical about the Arabs. They knew that the Arabs really didn't give a damn about them. Their emotional commitment to the Arab cause was fairly superficial, I think. Nevertheless, the spectacle of Israel conquering all of this Arab territory and humiliating these Arab states did arouse a certain amount of passion among the [Somali] political class. However, this passed fairly quickly. I don't remember there being any long term consequences of the war.

On the whole, though, it [my assignment to Somalia] was a very tranquil period. It was a good place "to learn the ropes," because I was able to take it all in in a fairly leisurely kind of way.

By December, [1974], it was pretty clear that we weren't dealing with a bunch of reformers but had some really hard core, revolutionaries on our hands. At the same time the Russians were moving more deeply into Somalia, with the base that they had established at Berbera, in the northern part of Somalia along the Red Sea coast. They put a major missile-handling facility there. They built a port to service their Indian Ocean Fleet. They would bring naval missiles [into Berbera] for refurbishing, refitting, and storage. The U. S. was getting really agitated about this, particularly on the Hill [Congress]. A few, really conservative Congressmen were calling for us to cut off relations with Ethiopia and with Somalia.

Satellite technology was just coming into its own. We were able to get very detailed, satellite photos of these Russian installations in Berbera. The Somalis were denying that any of this was going on, stating that this was just an agricultural equipment depot in the middle of the desert. They invited the U. S. to send a Congressional delegation to Somalia to inspect these facilities. It reminded me a little bit of the British holding a referendum in Kenya--did they really think that we were going to come over there and they were going to pull the wool over our eyes? We sent a delegation, and the delegation found exactly what it expected to find. The Somalis were furious. They said, "We invited you over here, we gave you the full run of everything, and then you came back with this outrageous report." Our delegation said that it was only reporting what it saw.

Relations with Somalia were very rough. There was a lot of dialogue back and forth with the Embassy about what they were really up to--were they really Russian stooges, were they really communists, or were the Somalis cynically taking advantage of the Cold War to build up their arsenal and milk as much aid as they could out of both sides? In many ways I think it was a classic example of the differing perspectives between the post in the field and the policy makers back in Washington. The people in the Embassy in Mogadishu were much more relaxed about all of this. They said that the Somalis weren't communists. They were just manipulating us and the Russians. They said that we should keep in touch with them but not let them get us all bent out of shape. The military [in Washington] were getting really agitated about the Soviet facilities [in Somalia].

Q: *This was the period when Secretary of State Kissinger was at the height of his influence. Kissinger saw everything in terms of the Cold War and an international, bipolar system.*

KULICK: Our dilemma was that we had put most of our eggs into the Ethiopian basket for many, many years. Ethiopia was clearly coming unglued, and we didn't really know what to do because, even though they had become very radical, they kept coming to us and continuing to ask us for more military assistance, citing the Russian buildup in Somalia. Kagnew Station was still in operation there [in Ethiopia], and the [U. S.] military was still saying that it was important. The Ethiopians were threatening to close it down unless we helped them, and the Somalis were beginning to build up to what looked like some intention of launching an offensive [against Ethiopia], taking advantage of the chaos in Ethiopia. Even though the military regime had taken

over in Addis Ababa, the rebellion in Eritrea was getting really critical. That was the point at which the [Ethiopian] request for assistance to fight off the Eritrean rebels in Asmara was made. I think that by the end of 1975 it became clear that we were just not going to be able to sustain it [an enhanced military assistance program] with the Ethiopians.

They would continue to try to get whatever they could out of us. But they, unlike the Somalis, really were committed revolutionaries. Sooner or later, they were going to boot us out of there [Kagnew Station]. I don't know. Things just sort of spun out of control. We didn't feel that we had an option in Somalia because the Russians were firmly ensconced there, while our base in Ethiopia was eroding. At that point the Russians began to make inroads into Ethiopia, and it looked as though they were going to take over the whole Horn of Africa. However, they hadn't really reckoned on the aggressiveness of their Somali clients. The Russians thought that they could hold this all together. They thought, in fact, that they could impose a "Pax Sovietica" on the Horn of Africa, but the Somalis weren't having any of that. They thought that the Ethiopians were really in a very weakened condition. The Somalis took advantage of their Soviet support and equipment to attack Ethiopia. At this point the Soviets, who were beginning to make real inroads into Ethiopia, told the Somalis that they couldn't do that. The Somalis replied, in effect, "Go to hell," kicked the Soviets out of Somalia, and invited the Americans in. [Laughter]

So in the space of three months there was an exchange of clients, and we took the leftovers in Somalia, while the Russians moved into Ethiopia. That was after I left the desk, though.

We could end this segment by my recounting how, after a year on the job I was approached by the then Special Assistant to the Director of INR...

HAROLD G. JOSIF
Deputy Chief of Mission
Mogadishu (1966-1969)

Born in Burma in 1920 to American Baptist missionaries, Harold G. Josif graduated from the University of Chicago in 1941. Josif served in the Army Air Corps during World War II, received a M.A. from Tufts in International Relations and entered the Foreign Service in 1947. His overseas posts included Pakistan, Portugal, India, Iran, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Somalia, and Libya. Josif also served as an instructor at the Air War College. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

Q: Why don't we go to Mogadishu? You were there from 1966-1969.

JOSIF: Right. From about July 1966 to November 1969, about three and a quarter years.

Q: What was Somalia like at that time?

JOSIF: Somalia was a promising country almost. In Africa, I think it was perhaps the only country you could call a democracy. It had a freely elected parliament. It had a prime minister who enjoyed a majority in parliament. They had a president who was directly elected. It had some advantages over most African countries. It had complete unity of language, namely the Somali language; of religion, namely Sunni Islam; not entirely uniform physical ethnicity, but close to it; and certainly a history of shared oral tradition and culture. Differences began to arise during the colonial period when the British took the north and the Italians took the southern parts. What the Somalis lacked desperately was experience in running a government. In the pre-colonial period, right through the 19th century, there had been no such thing as a Somali government of any sort. What experience they had was from colonial governance.

The basic social organization was provided by the family, the clan, and the tribe. I asked the embassy political officer to draw up a basic report on the tribal picture in Somalia. He produced a very long, detailed report. I didn't study it carefully. I was busy. I signed off on it. I should have perhaps emphasized the importance of this subject in an executive summary of a page or two. Anyway, when I was in Washington later, I was called in by an office that reviews despatches and told that that report was much too long. The implication was that this wasn't all that important. Well, maybe it could have been a better report, but it certainly was an important subject. Tribalism is why the country disintegrated in the 1990s.

We had a big mission in Mogadishu. We had a fairly large AID program, modest by comparison maybe to many African countries like Ethiopia, our neighbor, but we had an agricultural research program and an educational program training schoolteachers. We had a fairly big USIS and a considerable Peace Corps, and a consulate in Hargeisa which I supervised.

In January 1968, we had a visit by Vice President Hubert Humphrey. We got notice of this maybe a month in advance. I happened to be in charge then. Ambassador Thurston was in the States. So the planning fell on me. I mobilized the whole mission, AID and USIS. There was going to be an overnight visit. It was a strain on our logistics, but we thought it was great. Humphrey was certainly the highest ranking American ever to visit or likely to visit Somalia. Then the trouble began.

Humphrey had a couple other African posts to visit before he came to us. He and his party were beginning to get tired. They were in Addis Ababa when a couple of advance men came from the Secret Service and asked questions about security in the country. Their reports convinced Mr. Humphrey that his visit to Mogadishu should be canceled. Well, I hit the ceiling. I was still in charge. The ambassador wasn't arriving until the day before Humphrey was due. I said, "No, you cannot do this. This is a democratic country we are trying to support. They have been looking forward to your visit. There is no serious security problem." What they cited by way of evidence was that there were two members of the parliament who were communist or leftist of some sort. Well, it would be pretty hard to find a legislature in many countries that didn't have a couple. The key security point, from my experience was the attitude of the government. The government was really looking forward to this visit. They were, of course, hoping for some aid to result. Anyway, it was good publicity for them. We had a prime minister who was very friendly to us.

Finally, Humphrey made the right decision. He said, "Okay, I'll come, but I won't stay overnight." So, he arrived. With him was a large American press contingent, reporters from The New York Times, The Washington Post," and others. They were just astounded by the friendliness of the reception at the airport. The government had turned out tribesmen who were colorful and very enthusiastic. It was a marvelous reception. But the press had heard that this visit was once canceled, there was a security problem here, the people were not friendly, and so on, so they asked our USIS people, "How do you account for this discrepancy?" USIS ducked and said, "Well, talk to Mr. Josif." USIS arranged for them as a group to meet with me at the embassy. I told them, "Well, the embassy can't be held responsible for any misinformation that may have reached the Vice President's group before they arrived. We've always reported that the visit would be very friendly and we didn't see any serious problem." I did not identify the Secret Service as the source of the misinformation, but the press put two and two together. Their published reports were basically about a very friendly visit, but they also mentioned that the visit had once been canceled on security grounds, apparently because of the Secret Service.

Humphrey was delighted with his reception, but not with its press coverage. As he was flying to Nairobi, the next stop, his chief of staff apparently persuaded him to send a telegram (They had seen The New York Times report by this time.) that "Mr. Josif should be discharged from the Foreign Service if he cannot explain why he made such comments." Well, luckily, my ambassador, Ray Thurston, supported me 100% and said, "He was just doing his job," and so on. Humphrey dropped the demand. But he was angry, at least he or his chief of staff.

Q: Often it's the chief of staff. They get out on a limb and then they can't stand it if they're proved wrong.

JOSIF: That was one crisis I had. Ironically, I later received a Meritorious Honor Award for "outstanding contributions" to the successful visit of the Vice President to Somalia.

Then in 1969 Ray Thurston left and there was a gap of about six months when I was in charge before Fred Hadsel arrived as the new ambassador. During this period, there was a crisis at the AID-run agricultural research station. All of the Americans and other staff there quit and wouldn't return to work until security was improved. It seemed that they had been threatened, and one of their local employees had actually been roughed up, by local villagers who wanted more jobs on the premises. Alleged anti-Americanism was also involved. The director of that institution had called on the minister of agriculture, but nothing seemed to be happening. This had been going on for a week. So, finally, I decided that what was needed was a demonstration that we're not afraid to go back to work here. I went with my driver and the embassy car with the flag flying, drove there, made a tour of the vacant station, and drove back and told people about it. That got them back to work, as I think it shamed them. I never reported the incident to the Department.

Another interesting thing happened. Our Moon landing occurred in July of 1969. We put up some pictures of it in our USIS display case on the front of the embassy, which was on a downtown street, right on the street. There was a lot of discussion on the sidewalk among a crowd of people looking at this display case. I asked what they were saying and it was reported to

me, "They're having arguments about whether this is for real or just a fake." The skeptics seemed to have the upper hand. Could people land on the Moon? My wife was taking some Arabic lessons at that point. I asked her instructor if he could come up with some verses of the Koran that we could use to imply that this was part of a legitimate scientific, worldwide effort. Surely Mohammad had spoken in favor of broadening knowledge. A couple verses were found and added to the display case. That seemed to have a very good effect and it added to the credibility of our USIS.

Q: Did the Arab-Israeli 1967 War affect you? You have two things. You have the relations with Arab countries, which were strained. Also, the Canal was shot.

JOSIF: Right. Yes. We were isolated there. Air travel was cut off. Basically, we got in and out of Somalia through air connections to Europe. The Canal was closed and so on. But I don't remember that we had any physical hardships. We were concerned about local reactions to Israeli advances and victory. There was some tension there, but again, the attitude of the government, although it was a member of the Arab League, was moderate. We felt fortunate t hat we got through that period without any serious disorder.

One of the things that occurred while I was there was that the British decided to reestablish a diplomatic mission in Mogadishu. The man sent out to arrange for it was Sir Malcolm McDonald, who had been high commissioner to Kenya, among other things, and a cabinet minister in London. He asked for our help, in communications for instance. His main concern in talking to the Somalis was to make sure that they understood that if the British reopened a mission, it would not mean that they were promising any aid.

The last crisis while I was there was the coup d'état by which the Army under General Siad Barre overthrew the parliamentary government. Actually, it happened overnight, but I was entertaining Sir Malcolm McDonald that evening. Fred Hadsel had recently arrived. I got called out by our Somali political assistant, who said, "Something is going on. (He wasn't quite sure what.) It might be a coup." Sure enough, in the early hours of the morning, I got a phone call that there were troops on the street and it looked like a coup was underway. So, I got dressed hurriedly and drove down to the embassy; the streets were empty except for troops. As I was about half a block from the embassy, one of them shouted "Halt" and raised his rifle and pointed it at me. Probably the most courageous or most stupid thing I did in my life... I just kept on driving, parked in front of the embassy, jumped out, and ran in. I felt that if it were a coup, as it apparently was, there had to be a senior officer in the chancery. Sure enough, the ambassador couldn't reach the embassy. We were in touch by walkie talkie radios only. I was holding down the fort there, you might say, for a couple days. My wife would send down lunches with our driver. It was a rather sad period. One of the most disheartening things was to see some of the people we had been doing business with in the foreign office just disappear, or go to jail as political prisoners. It wasn't a particularly bloody coup, but it was pretty thorough. Siad Barre eventually failed because he was so thorough. He favored his own clansmen and alienated people of other clans and tribes.

Q: There has been this sort of backwards and forwards thing between us and the Soviet Union over Ethiopia. Can you talk about the view as seen by our embassy in Mogadishu about relations

with Ethiopia and the military presence and all that and the Soviets?

JOSIF: Yes. I think both sides considered Ethiopia to be one of the prizes in the Cold War. Somalia was very much a sideshow. We had an ambassador in Ethiopia while I was in Somalia who advanced the theory to the Department quite persuasively I think, that we should concentrate our efforts in Africa on the important states and not fritter away our aid and political leverage on minor countries, like Somalia in particular. Of course, we had a somewhat different view in Mogadishu. Our clients at that time had a parliament, an elected prime minister, and an elected president; we felt we had at least half a case. This was sort of a democracy. But we got the short end of the stick on aid. The best that we could do in the areas of security ties, for instance, was to give some modest support to the national police. In Somalia, they had the European-style police force, which was a national police force. They were equipped with some light weapons, trucks, and generally non-provocative items. Aid to the Somali military was out of the question. I think we did send them some trucks in the early '60s, but nothing of any dangerous import, whereas we had a large and continuing military aid program in Ethiopia. There were some geopolitical reasons for it. For instance, we had a large radio monitoring and broadcast facility in Eritrea near Asmara, the capital. I visited it once.

Q: Kagnew Station, the whole part of Africa rotated around it as far as American policy was concerned.

JOSIF: Yes. I must say, I was a little annoyed when I went there. It wasn't an official visit, but I asked for a briefing at the base and was given only an unclassified version.

At one point when I was in charge during that six months, there was also a chargé in Addis Ababa and another one in Nairobi. I proposed to the Department that they authorize a conference of the three chargés at Mogadishu. They agreed to that. There was a history of conflicting recommendations coming from these three posts. It was partly because of the Somali irredentism. You see, Somalia when it was formed was created out of British and Italian Somaliland, but Somalis felt that there were really five parts of Somalia; three were yet to come. One was French Somaliland, Djibouti. Another was the part of Ethiopia, the Ogaden, that projects into Somalia. Then there was the northeastern province of Kenya. Their flag showed the five pointed star. Sometimes, there were reasons why our neighbors should be anti-Somali, because the Somalis were misbehaving. Generally, it was just on a tribal basis, but once or twice the Somali government tried to mount a semi-military operation.

Q: Were the Soviets fishing in those waters at that point?

JOSIF: Well, yes, because when we turned down the Somali military on aid, they turned to the Soviets and received some aid from them. They had some Soviet tanks, for in stance. The Soviet presence did not seem to be very impressive. We noticed that there was rivalry between the Soviets and the Chinese. The last month I was there, we got the impression the Chinese were getting the upper hand. For instance, they put on a play in the national theater in town which was pure propaganda, apparently, and may have even been designed to prod the Somali military to take over. The coup that I referred to did occur just a few days after this play was put on, which

was a striking coincidence at least. I don't think that we or the Soviets felt that, when push came to shove, Somalia was worth Ethiopia. If you lost Somalia and gained in Ethiopia, you were ahead. Given that sort of a see-saw relationship there, if you were making way in one country, you were probably losing it in the other. Most bets were on Ethiopia.

Q: Did you feel that in reporting and influence in Washington, that Ethiopia was outweighing you like India and Pakistan?

JOSIF: Oh, yes, definitely. Ethiopia could hold high cards in population, economy, location, Kagnew, and OAU headquarters. So there was really no contest there.

This reminds me of an amusing incident at Mogadishu. Prime Minister Mohammad Egal was a northerner, spoke good English, and was married to a nurse, herself quite Westernized. He was probably the most modern Somali there was in the country at that time. He called me up. I was chargé. He said, "My wife and I are leaving for an election tour in the bush in three days. I hesitate to mention this to you, but I've seen in the Sears catalogue a picture of a nice portable toilet that could be used on such an expedition. We'll be staying out in the bush." I said, "Well, I'll do what I can, Sir. It's too late to order anything from Sears Roebuck or anybody else, but maybe we can do something here at the embassy." So, we found a toilet seat and cover and had the carpenter make a box and provided it with a removable pot underneath. Of course, it had to be painted, too. It was still reeking of fresh paint when I delivered it to the prime minister's residence personally on the morning he was leaving. He was very grateful for it. I reported this episode by wire to our usual addressees, under the heading "Operation Thunderbox." I understand it was read in the AF staff meeting to great amusement of the African Affairs staff.

But our ambassador to Addis Ababa was put out that I was wasting government money on such frivolity.

Q: When you left there in 1969, what was your feeling about whither Somalia?

JOSIF: Well, I was pessimistic. They had just had this coup. I left a month after the coup. Some of the best people in the country had been jailed. Others had been afraid to come back to the country. I didn't think General Said would be a very bloody dictator, but he would be methodical. In these small countries, you know everybody. He had been to our house, and the ambassador's house. We all knew the head of the Army, the head of the police, and so on. One of the discouraging things was that he jailed the head of the police, who was a really fine Western-oriented gentleman, as well as a devout Muslim, General Mohammed Abshir. He was jailed because it was the Army versus the police to some extent. The Army was considered pro-Soviet by reputation and aid. The police were pro-American because of General Abshir and our aid to them. He was in jail for many years, I understand, but wound up being the warlord in his home region. He is the chief of Somalia's northeast corner that sticks out into the Indian Ocean.

General Siad Barre ruled for almost 20 years. I can't say that I predicted the fall of his government, but I wasn't surprised when it fell apart on tribal lines.

MICHAEL E. C. ELY
Economic/Commercial Officer
Mogadishu (1968-1969)

Michael E.C. Ely was born into a career military family and was raised in a number of military posts. He received a bachelor's degree in international affairs from Princeton University. He served in the U.S. Army as a second lieutenant of artillery during the Korean War. Mr. Ely entered the Foreign Service in 1955, serving in Kuala Lumpur, Paris, Algiers, Mogadishu, Tokyo, and Brussels. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy on March 9, 1992.

Q: *What was the situation in Somalia? You were there from '67 to '69.*

ELY: Yes, early '68 to mid-'69. Somalia was still a nominal democracy; there was a parliament and a president. The Russians were arming the army, and we and the Germans were working with the police, giving them light arms, light planes, and communications, and resisting calls that they be turned into an opposition force.

Ray Thurston was the ambassador. Thurston was an old European pro. He'd been ambassador in Haiti although he missed out on something in Eastern Europe by going there. Thurston, with, I would say, amused sympathy and irony, saw the deterioration of the Somali political process. I left there at the end of summer in '69, and the military coup d'etat took place a couple of months later. The quality of the embassy wasn't very much. I didn't get on well with the DCM, who was heavy and unimaginative. The Political Section was weak. I considered myself a high-powered macroeconomist with a lot of financial background. This was kindergarten.

Q: *I have to add that, during this time, for just about a year, I was INR desk officer for the Horn of Africa, in '67-68. And my feeling, although I really didn't know the area, just the job, was that here's a country that you could buy. If you really wanted it, you could buy it, the only fly in the ointment being the fact that the Ethiopians would get mad at us if we did.*

ELY: Yes, I often used to come up with the idea that we ought to get a consortium of eight bidders together and buy the country, instead of renting it, and then go on the gold standard and do away with central banks and all this sort of thing. Just set up a legal system and let people come and go as they wanted, and not fool around with institution-building and all this other stuff. The Somalis are very intelligent people.

Q: *Beautiful people, too.*

ELY: Well, they're intelligent, they're handsome, they're also very difficult to deal with, very self-reliant, speak all languages, adapt to anything. But the country had almost no institutions, and the police, the army, and the central bank were the only institutions that functioned. And it was always very hard to get American diplomats to go there; Foreign Service Officers resisted.

When I got there, it really was the end of the world. There was one flight a week in from Italy, and that was it. They had broken off relations with Kenya, so there were no flights there. And you didn't get any visitors. But it wasn't all that bad. You were left alone. If your health was okay, you could enjoy it there. I shot a lot of birds and enjoyed that. Did a lot of swimming. Served out my time. Didn't have a lot to do.

Q: *What do you do? Here you've had all this training and you've been dealing in the rather complex world of economics and all this, and all of a sudden you're sort of put almost into, I won't say the bush, it's probably better saying into the sands and all.*

ELY: Well, I felt I'd been kind of shanghaied. I had; they owed the ambassador something, so they offered me up to please him. I served out my time there and did the best I could. As I say, I didn't get along very well with the DCM, who was heavy and unsympathetic, and I didn't think much of the work. But, you know, you've got to soldier on. You're sent there, so you do your best. You don't decide that the work is beneath you. You do what you can. So I did.

Q: *Did you find that everything we were doing in Somalia (I'm talking about the embassy as a whole, but obviously it's a small one, so you were picking up what was happening) was predicated on not upsetting the Ethiopians, which again was predicated on keeping Kagnew Station and Asmara open?*

ELY: Well, yes. Our policies in Somalia were conditioned by our closer relationship with Ethiopia. And this put us in a delicate position, because there has been a longstanding boundary dispute between Somalia and Ethiopia over the Ogaden that goes back to the end of the last century, when the first boundaries were laid out by the British. The Addis Ababa regime was fairly unsavory. They would send tax-collecting expeditions, which were essentially punitive expeditions where they'd go out and grab all the livestock they could, and maybe some of the women. Resistance would lead to villages being burned and people being shot, which led to the Somalis arming guerrillas and low-level conflict continually on the border, going up and down. There was no end to that one, and there still is no end. Somalia, of course, has collapsed into civil war and chaos. The two cities of Hargeysa and Mogadishu have been destroyed. The central government has been wiped out, and it is now being disputed over by rival clans, armed to the teeth, who fight private wars against each other.

Q: *What was our feeling towards the Soviet presence in Somalia in those days?*

ELY: In those days, the Soviets were backing the Somalis against the Ethiopians, and we were backing the Ethiopians against the Somalis. But we had a sea anchor in Mogadishu to keep the Somalis calmed down, and the Russians had a mission in Addis Ababa to follow what was going on there and keep in touch with the Ethiopians. After the military coup, then there was a good deal of switching of sides back and forth.

Q: *The damnedest thing.*

ELY: And the end result has been disastrous for both Ethiopia and Somalia. Although outside

powers should not be expected to be altruistic and philosophical in their approach to these backward countries, we can take no pride in what we did. We were driven by what the Russians did. And the Russians were being very aggressive. They put in some sort of naval installation in Berbera. They wanted to turn Somalia into a Marxist state.

Q: *Okay, the Soviets were doing this, and our policy was, if they're doing this, we've got to back the other side. But did you ever sit down and figure out what good this was going to do the Soviets, and think maybe we should just let this thing go? Or were we reactive?*

ELY: Well, I often thought about, you know, did it really make any difference what happened there. You have a general humanitarian reaction: Well, okay, this is a very poor, backward country, they want to modernize (at least some do), and we really should help them do it. We can bring them the things that they need, in terms of financial institutions and skills, doctors and legal assistants et cetera. And, yes, we're under some moral obligation to assist people who wish to modernize.

On the other hand, assisting Somalia has always been very difficult. The Peace Corps had a terrible time there. They managed to stay there for a while, but it was the most difficult Peace Corps assignment that they had.

Q: *Why was it?*

ELY: The Somalis are very independent-minded people, and you can't tell them anything. The Peace Corps never would go into secondary-school teaching, because once a Somali has a secondary-school education, he considers that he ought to be instructing you. So the Peace Corps stayed with housing and teaching English. They had a fairly significant failure rate, but they also did quite a good job.

Reacting to the Soviet Union...yes, we did it, and there was recognition that we did have a reactive policy. And we were searching for other instruments, other ways of doing business. After the emperor fell, we tried very hard to provide incentives to the successor regime to continue its contacts with the United States and to modernize and to build institutions. In a country that was composed of a mosaic of tribal affiliations, where Eritrea had been in revolt for many years, the danger appeared to be that Ethiopia would split into different countries, different mini-states. Washington was and still is deeply concerned about the split-up of countries in Africa because of the prospect of endless strife, both border disputes and rivalries.

Africa is a difficult place to live and work, and after I'd done Algeria and Somalia, I was glad to be quit of it.

FRED L. HADSEL
Ambassador
Somalia (1969-1971)

Ambassador Hadsel was born in Ohio on March 11, 1916. He received a bachelor's degree from Miami University, a master's degree from Clark University, and a Ph.D. from University of Chicago. He taught in some capacity at Rutgers University, George Washington University, Columbia University, John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, and Howard University. Ambassador Hadsel served oversees as a captain in the US Army from 1942 to 1946. His career in the foreign service includes posts in London, Ethiopia, and Washington DC. In addition, he was an Ambassador to Ghana and Somali. Ambassador Hadsel was interviewed by Edward W. Mulcahy in 1989.

HADSEL: The Somali period can be divided very simply: for the first months, until the latter part of October there was a parliamentary government headed by Prime Minister Egal and President Shermarke. The latter was assassinated, Egal was overthrown and the government was taken over in October, 1969 by a military dictatorship headed by Mohammed Siad Barre who is still the President today. This was a difficult period because the United States basically had been assisting actively in the economic development of Somalia. The Soviets were actively involved in military assistance. When the military became the government, the Soviets became advisors to the government and they moved against us, cutting down our programs, identifying people that were with CIA--they fingered some who weren't-- and declaring them persona-non-grata. With the military regime, we were unable to resolve what was becoming the major single obstacle in economic relations between the two countries. I refer to the famous "Title VIII" of the Foreign Assistance Act which said that nations whose ships, as determined by the flag they were flying, were involved in trade with Vietnam and some other countries, would not be eligible for continuing economic assistance. The Somalis, for various reasons that they never explained, permitted Communist China to put some of its ships under Somali flag. In due course, the Somali ships went into Hanoi and were spotted by our intelligence agents. We were trying desperately to point out to the Somalis that for the few thousands dollars which they gained in ship fees, they were likely to lose $ 150-250,000 of aid annually.

The distinguished Senator from Virginia, Harry Byrd, who was really opposed to economic assistance, was fed material by a reporter from some place in the State of Washington. He read into the Senate Record that ships flying the Somali flag were sailing into the communist post of Hanoi. This put the fat in the fire. We therefore were required to terminate our aid. This was taken by the Somali leadership as a deliberate blow against their country. As often happens, coincidence played a role. By chance, the German Parliament had debated Somalia in a critical way a couple of weeks earlier. This was taken as a Western European conspiracy against the struggling independent People's Republic of Somalia. This was by all odds the major crisis in our relations and we came very close to being all declared persona-non-grata. Our military attaché who a few months earlier had acted like a fool, had been kicked out--the Somalis were right in this case; our aid program, which had far more officers involved than our Embassy, was terminated; our information program continued under great difficulties. We were shortly restricted to a forty miles limit from Mogadishu. Consequently, normal travel were restricted; very shortly thereafter our Consulate General in Hargeysa was closed.

Again by chance, in 1972--as relations continued to be very tense--two American shipping firms entered Somali waters without permission. One was a tug boat fleet owned by a very important Texan Republican who later became Deputy Secretary of Defense. The captain, who knew nothing about international law, was sailing 500 yards off the coast without permission. This was followed by another incident of similar kind and two incidents became a conscious policy in Somali eyes. There was nothing I could do to persuade the Somali government that this was not a calculated insult on the part of the United States. We rode out the storm. We finally got the sailors released. It was nip and tuck for sometime. In fact my departure was delayed until the last tug boat captain was out of prison.

This to me was a fairly exciting two years. Nobody forgets his or her first assignment as Chief of Mission. The adversity that we faced brought the staff together in a spirit which could not otherwise have been the case. Life in Somalia was not easy. I was served by able officers and I was proud of what they were able to do under difficult circumstances. Consequently, in a way, this period of greatest adversity was one of the most, if not the most, interesting period of my career.

PAUL K. STAHNKE
Economic Officer
Mogadishu (1969-1971)

Paul K. Stahnke was born in Illinois in 1923. He served in the U.S. military from 1943-1946 and received a bachelor's degree and a master's degree, both in international relations, from the University of Chicago in 1950. Mr. Stahnke's career included positions in Germany, Italy, Japan, Somalia, Denmark, France, and Thailand. He was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan on June 1, 1994.

Q: With the end of the War College you were off to Africa.

STAHNKE: I was off to Africa, not voluntarily, but beginning with TET I had become totally disillusioned with our Vietnam policy and began vocally expressing my own views which were at variance with those of the administration, indeed, at variance with the White House, not necessarily with many elements in the State Department. Even before I entered the Naval War College, I was offered a good assignment in Saigon.

I turned it down saying that so long as we were in Vietnam I wanted nothing more to do with the East Asian Bureau. I paid for that statement. Personnel turned me down for all requested assignments, giving me only a choice between two African posts in which I could use my knowledge of Italian. Both had been Italian colonies where a good deal of Italian was still spoken. One was Somalia and the other was Libya. Somalia happened to be where friends of my wife and her family had established a banana plantation. So my wife said, "If we have to go to one of the two places, why not go to Somalia where I have some friends." And that is where we went.

Q: And, of course, if you had gone to Libya you would have been thrown out shortly thereafter.

STAHNKE: Possibly. The problem with Somalia was that when, after two years, I returned to the Department, everyone wondered where I had been. When I said Somalia, their faces turned blank. It was an unknown place to most Americans. Unfortunately, Somalia is now well known because of civil war and hunger.

Q: What was your job there, Paul?

STAHNKE: I was head of a very small economic section and, informally, the Ambassador's liaison with a large AID section. I was also Acting DCM for a period and, occasionally, Chargé. Because there wasn't much to do on the economic side, my more important job was the AID liaison in which I tried to work out a greater degree of coordination between our AID activities and our other activities in Somalia, including those of our CIA friends.

Q: Did we have a Peace Corps there in Somalia?

STAHNKE: We had a Peace Corps in Somalia which ended abruptly. Three months after my arrival, the military staged a coup d'etat, a bloodless coup d'etat as it turned out, led by General Mohammed Siad Barre who, though he had attended the military academy in Rome, had been "bought" by the Soviets who secretly encouraged his action. The government he replaced was weak and corrupt but it had been strongly supported by the Italians. We had also played a role, giving strong support to the police which was a para-military force. The national police chief was out of the country at the time of the coup which made it easy to neutralize them. I was told later that, on the night of the coup, a military officer broke into the home of the acting police chief, put a pistol to his head and said: "Are with us or against us?" Under the circumstances, the man had no alternative but to say he was with them. The military coup happened suddenly, in the middle of the night, as these things usually do.

That started perhaps the most dramatic day in my life. I knew that something was happening because of the lights and noises of motor vehicles and tanks in the town which was normally very quiet at night. My telephone was out of operation so I couldn't talk to anybody. I headed to the embassy earlier than I normally would as I knew something was up. I was stopped several times along the route. I think in the course of the day I had bayonets prodding my belly three or four times. The first time was on my way to the office. I found that my Italian was handy because most of the officers spoke Italian and had been trained by the Italians. So fortunately, knowing Italian, I was able to talk my way out of the first roadblock and able to make it to the embassy. The DCM had arrived shortly before I did. Our code clerk had locked himself in the code room, waiting for orders to destroy the codes and burn files. One Marine guard was on duty and kept asking us to unlock the gun cabinet and pull out the rifles so that we could defend ourselves against the military which, by now, had encircled the Embassy. We told him that would be madness and to keep his cool, which he very reluctantly did. We were in effect isolated from the outside world. The telephones were dead. Of course our radio/telegraph worked with Washington and we were able to send a few messages. But we didn't have much to say because we had no real

idea about what was actually happening - whether an isolated action, a revolution or coup d'etat.

Fortunately, because the political situation had become very unstable, we had obtained a number of single-band radios several weeks earlier that were placed strategically in several homes of Embassy members including, of course, that of the Ambassador. So we were able to communicate with .the ambassador who was completely blocked off by the military and was not permitted to move.

Q: Who was the ambassador at that time?

STAHNKE: Fred Hadsel. We both have threatened to write accounts of that day, both of us have drafts, but we have yet to do it. I hope we will do it either in combination or separately before we forget precisely what happened.

It looked like we were in for a long siege. In a preparedness session a few days earlier, the Administrative officer had assured us that he had stored away in a locked closet behind his desk a large amount of military C-rations, water and other emergency items. The DCM and I unlocked the closet to find boxes of coffee, sugar and a large supply of toilet paper. Nothing else! No food and no water except a limited amount in several drinking fountains. (No drinkable tap water in Somalia.) Our situation began to look serious indeed and we explore options on getting the siege lifted. Since neither the DCM or I spoke Somali (then not even a written language) and I was the only Italian-speaker of the two, I was nominated to talk with the military outside our door.

The first time I went out, I was immediately surrounded by a number of troops, all with bayonet-loaded rifles and one put his bayonet to my sensitive midsection as I beckoned to an officer who was nearby. Fortunately, he spoke Italian and seemed quite friendly. But, I found it hard to speak, with a bayonet prodding me. When I looked down, I saw the soldier had a shaking finger on the trigger which spurred me to tell the officer: "Look, we could talk much better if you could get this man to take that bayonet away from me, particularly to take his finger from the trigger." He did so order him, although the soldier kept his rifle on the ready. The second time the scene was repeated much the same as the first. I was unable to learn much from these discussions except that they were under orders to let no one enter or leave the Embassy because, as we found out later, they feared that we would organize a countercoup. Our first interest was hardly a countercoup; we wanted food.

Several of the Embassy staff did try to join us, despite our efforts to discourage them. They could have accomplished nothing and only added to the food problem. Fortunately, they were stopped by the military and forced to return home. In the meanwhile, we had been in communication via single band radio with the Ambassador to keep him apprised of the situation and with the DCM’s wife who, fortunately, had learned to operate the radio. We asked her for two things: (a) to send the DCM’s driver (who was at the home) to mine which was close by to assure my wife that I was well and (b) for him to bring some food to us. The driver managed to do both with ease. We discovered later that he had a suspiciously good relationship with the military but that didn’t matter to us at the time for we were quite hungry by the early afternoon when the sandwiches arrived. (Neither the DCM or I had eaten breakfast in our haste to get to the Embassy.

By mid-afternoon, the Ambassador was given permission to leave his residence to go to the Foreign Ministry where he intended to make a formal protest against the Embassy siege. On the way, he was permitted to stop briefly at the Embassy to talk with us and tell us that which he was attempting to do - i.e., get the siege lifted. He told us later by radio that the Acting Foreign Minister told him the siege would not be lifted until the situation stabilized. They still feared countercoup activities by us. The Ambassador was apologetic about his inability to join us but we were pleased that he couldn't because he could do nothing at the Embassy and we thought it potentially useful to have him at his home in case something untoward happened at the Chancery. We asked only that he use whatever means he might have available to continue urging a lifting of the siege.

Q: Let me interrupt and ask, was the foreign minister you referred to the old one or was this one of the coup plotters?

STAHNKE: Before then he was not foreign minister, he was number four in the ministry but had been suddenly overnight appointed as the foreign minister and remained the foreign minister for a number of years.

To conclude the story, we took turns sleeping during the night. Then, suddenly, about 5 a.m., the troops left. After checking carefully - and cautiously - around the Embassy, we confirmed the siege had been lifted. We informed the Ambassador and the Marine guards by radio (telephones were still not working) and departed for our homes after a fresh Marine came to relieve the exhausted (as we were) Marine guard who had courageously shared the siege with us. The streets were quiet with no road blocks. My wife was, of course, relieved to see me as I was to see her and the children. I showered, shaved, ate a decent meal and returned to the office where we spent the morning trying to assess the situation, difficult because of the chaos and lack of a normally operational government.

We did learn that a Revolutionary Council had been established, with Siad Barre as its head. He is the man who was finally ousted recently by another coup after which competing factions were unwilling to coalesce, leaving Somalia again in chaos, much greater than it was at the time of which I speak. In the intervening years, Siad Barre became somewhat of an ogre, responsible for a number of atrocities which surprised me because, at the time, he was a gentler man. I got to know him fairly well before the coup and we established a pleasant relationship which would serve me (and the Embassy) well in the months after the coup.

In the first few days we couldn't get anyone in the new government to talk with us. On the second day after the coup, I got the Ambassador's permission to make an attempt to talk with my closest Somali friend who was head of the Somali National Bank (and later Ambassador to the US). I didn't know whether he still held his position but drove to the Bank (telephones were still not working) in hopes he had not been ousted which he wasn't. He had a wide range of contacts and knew Siad Barre well, so he was able to give a bit of background to the coup and the present situation - although he really didn't know very much. I assured him that the US had no aggressive intent against the new government and wanted to establish normal relations with it.

He, in turn assured me that he would do his best to convince the Revolutionary Council of our friendly attitude. He noted, however, that the Soviets were now in a strong position of influence in the government and they might make it difficult for us.

Aside from that contact, we all had great difficulty in seeing anyone during the first weeks after the coup. The Ambassador was able to see only the foreign minister and then only on rare occasions from whom he got no clear answers because the foreign minister, himself, didn't know where he personally stood and where the government stood.

On the third day after the coup, we received an ultimatum telling us that the Peace Corps was no longer wanted and that they were to depart from Somalia within three days. We had something like 110 Peace Corps members spread throughout Somalia, often in remote locations. Most of them were teaching in outlying schools where competent Somalis, who had received subsidized university education in Italy and Kenya, refused to go, preferring to remain in the more civilized Mogadishu to sit about in coffee shops rather than go out into the bush. We, then, provided that service.

Three days, we told the government, was simply not enough time because it took almost that much time to inform them. We managed to get the time extended to a week and, with great effort, got them to Mogadishu within three or four days. We put these fine young men and women up in our homes while processing them for departure. They, of course, were very disappointed about having to leave the work for which they had come. The Air Force flew in several aircraft to evacuate them.

Q: Were other embassies subjected to the same treatment we were, or were we singled out?

STAHNKE: Other embassies were subjected to restrictions but we were singled out in particular because of their concern, presumably inspired by the Soviets, that we would engage in counter action. Although we never knew the full Soviet role in the coup, it was clear that they knew of it in advance and undoubtedly participated in its planning. Evidence to that was the fact that, immediately after the coup, they flew in several plane loads of people, with families, from the security services who remained during the rest of my stay in Somalia and much thereafter. They became close advisors to Siad Barre and created many difficulties for the American Embassy in particular but also for other embassies. One annoying restrictions, applied to all embassies, was a requirement that we had to get Foreign Ministry permission to travel anywhere beyond a 25 kilometer radius of Mogadishu. Other embassies usually had fewer problems in getting such permission than we did.

Q: This was when the country turned from neutrality and non-alignment and more tilting towards the Soviet camp? And it was related to problems with Ethiopia, I believe.

STAHNKE: Before World War II, Somalia had been an Italian colony. After the war, Italy continued to administer Somalia as a UN Protectorate. With independence in 1960, the Italian influence remained strong and they provided considerable budgetary subsidies to the financially strapped country. One of my last acts on the Italian desk in 1960 was to draft a memo to the

Secretary urging that the US provide only minimal aid to the newly-independent Somalia and press the Italians to assume the brunt of the burden. Upon arrival in Somalia eight years later, I was surprised and chagrined to learn that, in the meanwhile, Somalia had become the largest per capita recipient of US aid on programs that were ill-planned and barely operational. Our program was about $60 or $70 million which I calculated was something like $3,500 per capita, for a country basically of Nomads. Our programs were the wrong projects at the wrong time.

In the period before the coup, Somalia was nonaligned though very friendly with those who fed them most - the Italians and Americans. The aid we had given Somalia (however badly) was inspired by the Cold War and our military interest first in denying the area to the Soviets and second to secure the possibility of establishing bases there. The Soviets had also provided considerable aid to Somalia in these years, equally wasted. In this regard, I'll note that one of my more intriguing jobs in Mogadishu was to liaise with the Soviet DCM. This happened almost by accident. He and I had amused each other at various receptions with good natured jibes regarding our respective "ideologies" and, in particular, our respective aid projects, none of which worked as intended. We soon agreed that it might be useful to both our embassies if we met weekly to review frankly our respective aid projects. I got my Ambassador's permission to do so and, undoubtedly, he did the same. I, as well as he, had no illusion about the confidentiality of the talks. I told him at the start that I knew that he would report our discussions to Moscow as I would to Washington. Still, that said, our conversations were very frank and open. In describing the Soviet projects, he readily admitted their shortcomings and I gave him quid pro quo.

Obviously, after the coup, the Somalis tilted towards the Soviets. Whatever their real intentions (individually, the Somalis continued very friendly toward us), they had little choice. The Revolutionary Council was, in effect, prisoner of the Soviet security forces, now present in Somalia in significant numbers. The Soviets took quick advantage of their position, opening a naval base at the northern port of Berbera on the Red Sea, a strategic location that caused our military much concern. We were able to tell from our satellites that the Soviets were engaged in considerable construction in Berbera, suggesting that they intended to make it an important supply base for their fleet. Physically, we could get no where near the area because the Foreign Ministry flatly refused to give any of us, including the military attaché, permission to visit the port.

By a fluke in the system, I was the first American into Berbera after the coup. At that time, we had a non-operational consulate in nearby Hargeysa which was nominally kept open by several local employees. We took turns in visiting the post, about once a month, with Foreign Ministry permission. When it came my turn, I included a visit to the police chief of the area with whom I had made a firm friend while he was police chief in the south - aided mightily by the gift of a bottle of his favorite Scotch. I brought another bottle with me for this visit in which I had only been authorized to visit Hargeysa. During our friendly discussion, I mentioned casually that I would love to do some sightseeing in Berbera, now that we are in the cooler season. (In the hot season, temperatures in Berbera can get to 120 degrees). He was warmly sympathetic to the US and of course knew what my "sightseeing" would involve. He immediately got on the phone and called the Captain of police in Berbera, telling him that I would be coming down and that he should show me the maximum hospitality and cooperation.

I left the next day with the consular driver and a 4-wheel drive Land Rover. It was an area of Somalia I'd never seen before and had some of the most spectacularly beautiful scenery in the country. We stopped often for me to admire the scenery and then found we were running late. So, I asked the driver to drive faster which he did. The road was really an unpaved and rutted path through the bush, with many holes. We hit a large one which started a leak in the radiator. We had some water with us in a jerry can and quickly used that up. We stopped at every water hole on the way to renew our supply and that was barely sufficient to permit us to limp into Berbera, with radiator steaming and too late for our appointed rendezvous with the Police Captain.

Not knowing quite what to do next, I had the driver take me to the only hotel in town - very clean but minimal - where I got rooms for myself and driver while he went to get the radiator repaired. I cleaned up from our dusty trip and, soon thereafter, the Captain knocked at my door, indignant that I should have gotten a hotel room. He checked me out immediately and drove me to the mansion (literally) that had been the residence of the British Commissioner during the prewar days in which the British loosely administered the north of Somalia, then called British Somaliland.

The "mansion" had aged considerably since the departure of the last British Commissioner, presumably before World War II - or during the war. I was shown to my bedroom which, apparently, had once been a large reception room. It was huge, with high ceiling, and furnished only with an army cot, a wooden crate that served as a night stand with a table lamp on it lit by a bulb that seemed to be no stronger than 15 watts. While the accommodations left something to be desired and were much less comfortable than the hotel room I had left, they had one great advantage over the hotel - we were on a small hill overlooking the port now with filled with a number of Soviet naval vessels.

After I had unpacked, the Police Captain invited me to the terrace to meet the Army Major in charge of the military contingent at Berbera. We drank Scotch I had brought (a never-failing inducement for friendship in that Muslim country) and talked with a background of singing at the nearby Soviet officers' club. I told the Major that I much admired the scenic beauty of the waterfront and asked whether I would be permitted to photograph it. Knowing precisely what I meant, he laughed and said: "Don't ask me the question, just take your photograph but don't be obvious about it, there is a Soviet naval squadron in town." I managed to get some good shots of the Soviet vessels the next morning as I took pictures of other elements of "touristic" interest. Those were the first on-the-ground shots we were able to get of the Soviet naval base. I was able to learn that the base was established primarily as a refueling and repair facility.

After my morning tour, I was guest of honor at a luncheon at the residence in a dining room lacking the splendor it undoubtedly had when the British Commissioner was resident. Anyone of importance in the Berbera area was present, which gave me an excellent opportunity to get a sense of the effects of the coup in that area. Though they were cautious, a number of snide references to the Soviets made clear that they were not overjoyed by their presence. Again in my honor, because the Somalis knew the Americans loved salads, we all had a large plate of salad with our excellent meal. The others ate theirs avidly but I didn't touch mine (aware of the strong

admonition we had received never to eat a salad or anything raw unless first soaked in chlorine and carefully washed in boiled water). The Major, and others, noted my abstinence and urged me to eat. I felt I had no choice but to do so. The result was a return to Mogadishu with a severe case of diarrhea which took a week to cure.

Long after my departure from Somalia, the political situation in that part of Africa changed dramatically. The revolution in Ethiopia and overthrow of the Emperor resulted in the country falling under the Soviet sphere of influence. The Somalis, arch-enemies of the Ethiopians, then threw out the Soviets and Siad Barre rediscovered his love of the US. All of this became irrelevant after the fall of the Wall and the Soviet Union, of course.

Q: Well, Paul, I presume after what you are telling me about the treatment we received that we did not continue our AID program in Somalia.

STAHNKE: Not true. We were then in the midst of developing a very important project, undoubtedly the most practical and useful AID project in that country - a drinkable water supply system for the city of Mogadishu. Until that system became operational, the only drinkable water in the city had to be hauled in from wells outside the city and put in rooftop tanks. The Somalis (presumably with Soviet approval) agreed to a continuation of this project and we completed it after my departure. The system, when completed, didn't actually bring water into houses but into strategic locations where people could get their water from fountains put there. I understand that the system was destroyed as most of the city during the civil war that still continues.

Q: What was the Somali attitude towards the Israeli-Arab conflict?

STAHNKE: The Somalis are Muslims and supported their Muslim brothers in the area. That was their official and I think their personal position as well. But, I don't recall that they had any strong feelings about the issue.

Q: So *they had no truck with Israel at all? Israel was doing many things in African countries that refused to recognize it.*

STAHNKE: No, they had no activities in Somalia at all. As far as I can recall there was no Israeli embassy there.

Q: Did you believe that our policy towards Somalia was the correct one at that time?

STAHNKE: Politically, I think we handled the situation as well as we could after the coup. We had to try to maintain whatever influence we could in a country now dominated by the Soviets. Our pre-coup activities were mainly influenced by strategic considerations, including our AID projects about which I have already noted my concerns. I felt then that we should have let the Italians assume the major share of that burden. Moreover, our projects were simply not well thought out except for the Mogadishu water project. Earlier, we had started and completed another water project outside of Chisimaio, the southern port city. I went down there for the opening of the plant. It was a beautiful water purification plant of modern design which our

technicians were teaching the Somalis to operate. It had two major problems as we learned later: (a) the plant was far too big for water requirements then or in the foreseeable future and, hence, it became a very high cost operation and (b) the Somalis, even after training, proved unable to run the plant with its specific requirements of injection of purifying chemicals, etc. I should add that the training program was never completed because, after the coup, our technicians were so harassed that they had finally to leave the country. But, even if they had been able to complete the training, the plant could not have been run cost efficiently because it could operate at only about 20 percent of capacity. So, the plant was gradually abandoned as too expensive and complex to run.

The only satisfaction I got from our mistakes was that the Soviets made even greater mistakes. The Soviet DCM told me a marvelous story about the meat canning plant that they had brought to Somalia - antique already then. The canned meat the plant produced from the scrawny Somali cattle was of such poor quality it could not be sold anywhere. The inventory kept accumulating until the Soviets shipped it back to the Soviet Union where, according to my DCM friend, the market had no alternative to accepting it.

WILLIAM E. SCHAUFELE, JR.
Senior Advisor to United States Representative to the United Nations
New York, New York (1971-1975)

Ambassador William E. Schaufele, Jr. was born in Ohio in 1923. He received a B.A. from Yale University in 1948 and a M.A. from Columbia University in 1950. He served overseas in the U.S. army from 1942 until 1946. In addition to Poland, his overseas posts included Germany, Morocco, Zaire, and Burkina Faso. He was interviewed by Lillian Mullin on November 19, 1994.

Q: *Were these "radicals" in Morocco getting some help? Did they have leaders who had been trained in the Soviet Union? Did that happen in Morocco?*

SCHAUFELE: If I would have to give an absolute answer, I would say, "No." The Communist Party of Morocco -- and there was a Communist Party -- was a direct offshoot of the Communist Party of France. They had their contacts with the Soviet Union. However, the Soviets, I think, had more effect in places like Ghana and Guinea -- not in Tanzania, because Julius Nyerere was too smart for them. Eventually, they were fairly successful in Somalia. You find leftists who helped the Angolans. The Congo (Leopoldville), later Zaire, was a big target for the Soviet Union, and they were very successful. The Soviets had influence on and certainly helped the Algerian resistance movement.

When we complained about the fact that 18 Americans were killed in Somalia, we didn't hear the same complaints from Pakistan, which had 85 Pakistanis killed. I don't think that that kind of "special position" is tenable or proper. However, as new Presidents learn how to conduct foreign policy, they usually come out with a certain level of support for the UN, because it takes the

"heat" off them. They realize that. I'm not particularly concerned about the long run, but it gets very difficult under certain circumstances, if we more or less immobilize ourselves and look like the "odd man out" and the constant opponent of certain things that the UN may do. I'm sure that the UN will still be there for a few more years.

However, I went on with the work of the Bureau, handling various issues. I was invited over to the White House with some other people for a reception given by the new President. President Carter knew who I was and said that he had heard lots of good things about me. I was trying to get my thinking in order on how I was going to present some of these matters to the new team in the State Department and what they were going to be willing to do in Africa. President Carter had agreed to let a "Time" magazine correspondent accompany him on a day as President in the White House. A previous President had done this once -- I can't remember which one it was. This correspondent was with President Carter all day long, except for confidential meetings and that sort of thing. At the end of the day President Carter came out to the Rose Garden at the White House and said, among other things, that he was now determined to make a "friend" of Somalia.

This should have been a signal to me, I guess. It came as a surprise to President Carter's Assistant Secretary for African Affairs. Actually, the Somali Ambassador in Washington had very insistently, during the whole time that I was Assistant Secretary, pushed for improving relations with Somalia. We still had diplomatic relations, but the Soviets had gained a foothold in Somalia, which allowed them to establish a naval base at Berbera. Ambassador Abdul of Somalia kept talking to me about improving relations. I said, "Well, what is it that you want?" He said that they wanted arms. I said, in effect, "Well, what is the 'quid pro quo'? What would you give in return for that?" There was no answer that made any sense to me. I always liked Ambassador Abdul. He was enjoyable and interesting to be with, but I couldn't give him any satisfaction.

So when I heard this announcement by President Carter in the Rose Garden, I figured that somebody had given Ambassador Abdul access to the White House. Since it didn't come from the State Department, it came from somebody, somewhere in the new, foreign policy team. I had not been consulted about it. I didn't do anything about it, obviously. I couldn't do anything about it.

So I waited for someone to tell me what all this encompassed. I didn't have to wait very long -- maybe several weeks. I knew, or assumed, that this matter included arms. Then I got a call from the National Security Adviser's office. The person calling me said, "We have now received a request from Somalia." I said, "Oh?" This person said, "Yes, it is for 75,000 rifles. What do you think of that?" I said, "Not very much." The person said, "Why not?" I answered that if the Somalis want 75,000 rifles, those are to fuel hostilities in the Ogaden area of northeast Ethiopia. There was a dead silence and then came the question, "What is the Ogaden?" I said, "The Ogaden is a province which everybody recognizes as Ethiopian but which the Somalis claim and which the Somalis continually invade." "Oh," this person said. Of course, they should have known that in advance. I inferred later that the arms were never delivered.

However, that told me that if the African Ambassadors in Washington could get access to the White House without going through the State Department, there wasn't much that the Assistant

Secretary for African Affairs could do about it. Then I heard that Andrew Young had been appointed the U. S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations. His staff, most of whom I knew and who had made one point or another to me about African policy over the years, had said that they were surprised at my continuing in the office of Assistant Secretary and that Andrew Young didn't know about it. When I heard this, I said, "Well, I'm surprised at that because Andy Young is so close to the President. You'd think that the President would have said something to him" or arranged to have something said to him. Well, that was practically the end of the road for me as Assistant Secretary, because it wasn't very long before Secretary Vance called me up to his office and said that they were going to replace me.

During my tour as assistant secretary the Somali ambassador, whom I liked and enjoyed, regularly sought a change in US policy toward his country. Somalia had bet on the Soviet horse which now possessed a base in Berbera. Also historically the Somalis laid claim to the Ogaden while the US accepted Ethiopian claims. When I asked the Somali ambassador what he sought from us, his reply was military assistance. However, when I asked what the Somali quid pro quo would be I never got a coherent answer.

Evidently he had access to the new tenant at the White House, through whom I don't know. Carter had agreed to allow a Time correspondent to spend the day with him (except for classified meetings and conversations). On television, at the end of the day, coming out of the Rose Garden, Carter said he wanted to make friends with Somalia. This came as a complete surprise to his Assistant Secretary of State for Africa. I did not immediately pursue it since I did not want to appear as the "left-out" career guy who couldn't understand the greater interests of his president. Eventually I got a call from someone at the NSC who told me that they had received the expected request from Somalia. I said "uh-huh" and he went on to say that it was for 75,000 rifles. "What do you think of that?" he asked, probably gratified that it did not include sophisticated weapons. I replied, "Not much! They're for the Ogaden." Dead silence. Then "What is the Ogaden?" I told him to do his homework and, I gather, the rifles were never delivered.

PARKER D. WYMAN
Deputy Chief of Mission
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (1972-1975)

Parker Wyman was born in Illinois on August 23, 1922. He received a bachelor's degree form Harvard University. He served in the US Army from 1943 to 1946. His career in the Foreign Service include posts at Cairo, Dusseldorf, Berlin, and Saigon. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.

Q: *Expanding this a bit, from your point of view--we had this army dependent on us, but a fairly well equipped military force, and yet most of it at that point was poised against Somalia. Somalia was another country with whom we wanted to maintain good relations, and the balance between these two was always a major problem. How did you feel about the Somalia part of the equation?*

WYMAN: Well, the key factor there was that although we desired good relations with Somalia, the Soviet Union had come in some years before I arrived, and really become the primary patron, the primary backer, the primary helper of Somalia; in a fashion which, in some respects, resembled our position in relation to Ethiopia. However, they had provided practically nothing in terms of economic assistance, but their emphasis on military assistance was very heavy. And they had actually--on an annual basis--provided much more military assistance for Somalia than we had for Ethiopia--much more.

The result was that Somalia was yearly becoming a greater threat to Ethiopia, because Somalia had always claimed--ever since it became independent--that it was entitled to a very large slice of Ethiopia, known as the Ogaden. They made it clear that they expected one day to get it back, by one means or another. Since the Ethiopian government showed no disposition to give them an inch of it, there was a distinct military threat there that everybody was aware of. And the threat was growing, as I say, every year. So that was the picture between Ethiopia and Somalia. That played a very important role in all those events that were to follow, during the Revolution.

Well, what happened was that in some distant military outpost, in the Ogaden--the semi-desert area, in the southwest of Ethiopia, where there were a good many military outposts because of the fear of a Somalian invasion--there was a severe shortage of water The well was not producing as much water as normal--the well that everybody relied on for water. The officers insisted on taking a large proportion of the available water for themselves, and apparently leaving little water for the enlisted men, and certainly considerably less water than they thought they should have

Now, in what I've said before, I think you can see the beginnings of this story, when I talked about the Soviets backing Somalia with far more military equipment than we were providing to Ethiopia. The key thing, I think, to have in mind here--in terms of U.S.-Ethiopian relations--was that prior to the revolution--and in the early stages of the revolution, and also right up to the time I left Ethiopia--the one subject the Ethiopians wanted to discuss with us any day and every day was increased military assistance.
As I say, they had very little to say about the drought. They never really came to us and wanted additional economic assistance, as such. But they hammered away at us constantly on, "Why can't we have more military assistance?" And quite understandably, because they not only had a very serious insurgency going on in Eritrea, but they also had a threat from Somalia--that had openly said it wanted this chunk of territory of theirs--growing all the time. So they were very concerned about it. They wanted to get far more, in terms of military assistance, from us than we were giving them.

Now, what we were providing them in military assistance, when I arrived, was approximately $9,000,000 annually. In response to all of this urging from them, constantly, we finally got up, I believe, to a level of about $12,000,000.

Q: *Still pretty small potatoes.*

WYMAN: Of course. Now, what needs to be taken into account, at that point, is that this was

still in the period when South Vietnam was in existence, and the American Congress was dominated by the Vietnam syndrome; and when military assistance--in political terms--was an obscene word, practically.

To go to congressional committees, and try and get an increase in military assistance--at the time when military assistance was being cut back because of the Vietnam syndrome--was an impossible job, frankly. You could try. I guess I shouldn't say impossible, because we did manage to get these very slight increases, but beyond slight increases was obviously impossible. There was no way. Congress just could not focus on the particular Ethiopian-Somalian situation to that extent. They were dominated by this general idea that military assistance--we've got to cut back, it's a bad thing. So we were really boxed in on that score, and yet this was the one thing that all these Ethiopian governments cared about a great deal. And there was an interesting aspect of that, too. We had to provide an explanation to the Ethiopian government of why we didn't provide more military assistance, in view of this Somali threat. There were basically, I think, only two arguments that could be used. One was that we really think you're exaggerating the Somali threat; it's not really as bad as it looks. And you would support that thesis one way or another. Or, the other argument you could use was to talk about the effect of Vietnam on the U.S. Congress, and on its attitudes towards military assistance. And explain, in practical terms, the limitations this placed on us when we tried to increase military assistance for Ethiopia.

The telegrams we would get from the Department stressed the first argument about the threat from Somalia being overdone, much more than the other one. I tried hard--well, put it this way--I stretched the instructions I had just as far as I possibly could to emphasize the congressional difficulty, rather than the overblown threat from Somalia. Really, for two reasons.

One, I felt that their concerns for Somalia were perfectly well-founded, and in fact, they proved to be. Secondly, I realized--well, I could naturally be more conscious of this than they would tend to be in Washington--that if you went to the Ethiopian authorities at that time, and said, "Look, you don't really need to worry about Somalia," they would write us off--particularly those of us who were talking to them there in the Embassy.

They would think, "Well, obviously what Washington is getting from its people in Mogadishu, and from Addis, is just total nonsense. We're dealing here with some idiots. Talking to these guys is hopeless, because they're idiots; they can't see the situation."

And I thought, "Really, we don't want to get that reaction from them, because it will impact on everything, if they regard us as idiots not worth talking to." If you put the stress on the other factor--how military assistance looks to Congress because of Vietnam--I don't think it will be as damaging in terms of their whole attitude towards our government, and its representatives to them, as the other viewpoint would be. So that's why I did it that way.

Q: *While we're talking about this, what sort of reports were you getting from the other side of the moon? And that is, from our embassy in Mogadishu, in Somalia, at the time, about the Somali threat, and the buildup there?*

WYMAN: Well, we were getting reports that gave us a fairly good idea of the large dimensions of the assistance that was coming from the Soviets; that was pretty apparent. I don't think that they had all the details, because of course the Soviets were concealing that to some extent. But it was certainly clear from their reporting that the amount of military assistance, and the actual physical equipment that the Soviets were pouring into Somalia, far exceeded what we were doing for Ethiopia. That was the key factor.

And that was why I personally felt there was plenty of reason for the Ethiopians to be concerned about this situation. I have a feeling that in some of the telegrams I sent we indicated that the threat looked pretty bad to us--from Somalia--seen from Addis. And I believe that the Department didn't really answer us directly, but whenever they would send us some instructions to be conveyed to the Ethiopians, as to why we had to turn down their latest request to increase the military assistance by a vast amount--there would always be this point in there that really the Somali threat isn't as big as it appears.

Now let me weave this into the chronology--this military assistance point, again. As I say, this emphasis from their governments on this point, and on increasing it; and a desire to have meetings with us, attended by their top-ranking generals--which we did participate in--all of this was very pronounced, all through this period that I was there.

I remember it most vividly at one particular meeting, shortly after the Emperor had been deposed, and General Aman Andom had come in as the head of state--and I met with him. The one subject that he wanted to talk about was military assistance. He hadn't discussed it with me before, himself. He gave me the standard approach, as to how great the Somali threat was, and how they had openly said long ago they were going to have the Ogaden--they must have it back. How, as the long friend of the United States, Ethiopia needed help from us, and so forth.

I gave him, in a little more extended version than usual even, all the response--although it was difficult to talk too long on the subject, particularly when I didn't want to put much emphasis on this point of the Somali threat not being very great--but I made it as clear to him as I could why we could not do more. And he kept coming back with questions, and so forth. We had quite an extended meeting on the subject, and I really felt that I'd said everything that could be said, and said it as clearly as it could be said. And as we were saying goodbye, he said to me--his exact words were--"Mr. Wyman, just tell Washington that I still don't understand."

As I say, there was a certain inevitability that the Ethiopian government at that time would go in that direction, provided the Soviets were willing to leave behind all their investment in Somalia to do that. The answer may be that at the beginning the Soviets thought they could be friendly with both sides. There was a report that Castro was supposed to come over and try and mediate, and convince the two countries that the Soviets were going to be a strong supporter of both of them. But then that option was really blown up when the Somalian government went ahead and went in there.

ROBERT RACKMALES
Political Officer
Mogadishu (1972-1973)

Robert Rackmales was born in Maryland in 1937. He graduated from Johns Hopkins University with a degree in history in 1958 and studied in Germany on a Fulbright fellowship. He also did graduate work at Harvard University. In addition to Nigeria, Mr. Rackmales served in Yugoslavia, Somalia, and Italy. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on May 11, 1995.

Q: *You left the Department in '72 for a garden spot. To Mogadishu. You were there from '72 to '73?*

RACKMALES: That's right.

Q: *This is the Somalia Republic.*

RACKMALES: That's right. Actually one of the reasons they asked me to go to Somalia was that General Siad, the Somali leader, was becoming closer and closer to the Soviets. The Soviets had stepped in after the army coup in 1969. Somalia had tried to maintain a balance and to remain neutral, so they asked western countries to train its police force, and the Soviets to train the military. Well, that turned to be a rather fateful choice because it gave the Soviets great entre when the military took over in a coup. In '72 - '73 when I was there, they were the dominant foreign power. I would qualify that by saying that the Somalis remained extremely xenophobic, they mistrusted the Soviets as well as the West. This was not a loving relationship. We got to know some of the Soviet embassy people reasonably well and they would speak frankly about certain issues, and one certainly was that they all felt very uncomfortable there. They were treated with the same suspicion as diplomats, as we were. But they were providing the Somali military with the wherewithal to try to recover eventually what they viewed as lost territories in the Ogaden.

Q: *Let me backtrack just a bit on this. Can we talk once again about the contacts...*

RACKMALES: Very limited contacts. Any ordinary Somali who would be seen talking to Americans would be at the very least questioned very harshly, and possibly imprisoned just for having talked to us. Our cook, for example, got thrown into jail for three days for defending United States in a bar. Generally speaking we could not meet with ordinary Somalis. We had very limited official contacts, but had to rely primarily on official statements for day to day information. There was an official news service. With other diplomats we would share at cocktail parties the limited amount of information that we had. The Italians had the best contacts, in fact better than the Russians because Mogadishu had been an Italian colony and a lot of people still spoke Italian. They had a slightly larger embassy than we did and had known a number of key Somalis for many years. So they had the kind of depth that was very helpful.

Q: *Would you mention again, because we missed it on this tape, about Hargeysa?*

RACKMALES: We had a consular problem in Hargeysa and I tried to use it to get up there myself, and also make a side visit to Berbera which was the big Soviet base. Berbera is a city on the Red Sea. The Somalis turned that down, so I sent the consular officer just to Hargeysa and they did allow him to go up, but he reported back that everyone he talked to had been called in immediately, and some of them arrested. Hargeysa was a particularly delicate area for them, the whole north was, but there was also a general policy that they didn't want people talking to foreign diplomats.

Q: *Here is this relatively unsophisticated country, but they certainly had a very sophisticated police organization.*

RACKMALES: We, in fact, had to rely on that sophisticated police organization in the aftermath of the assassinations in Khartoum of Ambassador Noel and his deputy. There were several countries in Africa where PLO-connected terrorists suddenly appeared and started casing American missions. That happened in Kampala and Mogadishu. The group that was casing us moved in directly across the street and made no particular attempt to disguise their activities. So we went to the Somali government which was fully supportive, and greatly stepped up the protection afforded the embassy. We were driving around with Somali escorts. And one of the things that struck us was that, although there had always been beggars in the general area, a new "blind" beggar suddenly appeared in front of the Embassy. We were told quietly that he wasn't really blind or a beggar. So they were using a lot of different techniques. They called the Palestinians in and questioned them very closely. Eventually they expelled that group. But that activity did result in shortening both my own and Ambassador Looram's tour because his wife was a Rothschild, and I am also Jewish, and the security people came out in that context and recommended that the threat was too high to continue the normal tour of duty.

Q: *Before we leave this would you talk again about your one contact?*

RACKMALES: I noticed in the news bulletin there was a new official who apparently had the United States as part of his responsibilities. So I called and somewhat to my surprise I was able to get an appointment, because usually requests for official meetings required an extremely clear reason, no courtesy calls or anything like that. But in this case he did agree to meet with me, and we had actually a pleasant conversation. He was a bit guarded, but otherwise friendly. So we did end up, myself, the ambassador and the DCM, the three of us were sharing this one useful contact.

Q: *This shows how hungry reporting officers can be, because you have to have somebody. When you left Somalia how did you see it? In '73 where did you see American interests at the time, and how did you see things developing there?*

RACKMALES: There were colleagues in the embassy who said, "Why are we here? It's pointless, there's almost no real business, why don't we just close up the place?" My reply was, "This current arrangement is not eternal, the country is going to change in ways that we can't foresee, and we have to be positioned so that when things do change we can react appropriately."

And in fact only a few years later there was another military coup, this time in Ethiopia. The Soviets said, "Ha, we have a juicier prize here." They were realistic enough to know that you can't have both Somalia and Ethiopia as clients. So they dropped Somalia unceremoniously. We picked up Somalia, maybe a little too eagerly in my view, but anyway we did. So there was long term benefit in having it even under conditions when there was not a lot of work...I remember that our office hours were 7:00 to 2:00 five days a week and 7:00 to noon on Saturday. And at 2:00 Ambassador Looram would come around and direct you to stop whatever you were doing, saying, "How can you possibly be so inefficient." This was a credit to him and extremely important given the isolation, and the fact that the medical facilities were terrible. So at 2:00 we shut down, we went to the beach houses, we swam, played bridge, etc. Despite the stress from social isolation, and poor medical facilities, Mogadishu was actually quite a pleasant place.

Q: *Was drinking a problem?*

RACKMALES: The spouse of one officer had a serious drinking problem. I don't recall that most people had severe problems with alcohol. There was one problem where there was a severe marital problem of someone whose spouse had gotten involved during a trip to Asmara, and this person had a friend in Asmara who sent him a message back. And I remember that turned into a crisis where I had to go with the nurse because the spouse, when confronted with this, had taken an apparent overdose of something. It turned out, fortunately, that it was not a serious enough overdose to threaten her life. But she was distraught, and needed support. It was not always an easy post for families.

Q: *Did we feel that the East Germans were in many ways the most effective tool of the Soviet Union overseas. I always think of the East Germans having, one, one of the best intelligence services; and two, being able to establish very good counterintelligence services, or anti-spy services in countries such as Libya, Syria, they were sort of good advisers for those repressive regimes.*

RACKMALES: That's right. There was a kind of division of responsibility among the satellites of the Soviet Union and one of the roles that they asked the GDR to undertake was intelligence, and often police training in third world countries. So they were active in a number of places. If I remember correctly they had a program going in Somalia as well when we were there.

ROGER KIRK
Ambassador
Somalia (1973-1975)

Ambassador Roger Kirk was born in Rhode Island in 1930. He received a bachelor's degree from Princeton University and entered the Foreign Service in 1955. His career included positions in Italy, the Soviet Union, and Vietnam, and ambassadorships to Somalia, Romania and the U.S. Mission to the United Nations in Austria. Ambassador Kirk was interviewed by Horace G. Torbert in

May 1991.

Q: *Well then you went to the poor old country of East Africa.*

KIRK: That's right. I remember I came back from a session of the conference and was told that Archer Blood, the director of Personnel or something like that at the time, wanted to see me. I went up to see him and he told me that very seldom in his particular job did he have to give people good news, but he wanted to tell me that I'd been selected to be the Department's nominee for ambassador to Somalia, to my total surprise. I wasn't of a high enough rank really, and certainly not old enough, at least in those days. I was the token youth, I think. Then I had never been in Africa, and only had a reasonable approximation of where Somalia was, if the truth be known. But that was very exciting, and I remember coming home and telling my wife we were going to Africa, and seeing her face fall. But I said, "But as ambassador," and she looked at me in total disbelief.

The reason for that was, I think, some knowledge of Italian many years back, some ability to demonstrate an ability to operate in difficult countries because Somalia in those days was a close friend of the Soviets, and the rules for the Americans in Somalia were very much like the rules for Americans in Moscow or any one of the Iron Curtain countries.

Q: *Was this among the really bad times, or did it become a little bit better?*

KIRK: No, but by this time...I was told about this in April let's say, and actually went out to Somalia in October I guess, I can't remember exactly, '73. And at that time the Soviets were definitely Somalia's best friend. We were not allowed to travel more than 40 kilometers outside the city, Somalians were not allowed to come to our embassy, and relations with the Somali government were quite distant. We had no Peace Corps, no AID program.

Q: *What did you do while you were there?*

KIRK: Not a great deal to do except to try and keep up the morale of the very small staff, and to report the best we could on what was going on. I remember Tom McElhiney, who was then quite senior in the management side, and who had been ambassador in Africa, telling me when I went up to see him, "Now, Roger, remember that you are in a small place. If you decide you want to send a telegram to Washington, take a swim. If, when you come back from the swim, you still want to send a telegram, then send it." I always thought that it was good advice. "Don't bother Washington too much," albeit, it was true that the Soviets had use of the facilities in Berbera, and there was a certain amount of interest in what was going on in Somalia.

Q: *At that time we closed up Hargeysa, which I opened up by the way.*

KIRK: Did you?

Q: *How many people did you have?*

KIRK: We were down to a very small operation, and the situation got, if anything, a bit worse during my time there. My predecessor, Matt Looram, had left quite quickly.

Q: *It was all rather nasty.*

KIRK: His wife, a Rothschild, had been not only threatened, but an assassination team had come in that we felt was targeted against her, so she was evacuated immediately, and he was shortly thereafter. So when I got there--my wife is not a Rothschild, I was about to say, "I regret to say," but let's see how that actually works out, I don't mean it that way. One of the Somali guards used to sleep in front of the gate when we went in, and when we went out, and the whole rest of the day and night. He was left over from the security threat there had been.

It was essentially, if you will, a holding operation. In fact, I was in the stadium when a Soviet visitor, I think it was the Prime Minister, I can't remember now, came. It was announced that the Somalis and the Soviets had signed a friendship treaty, which we reported back to Washington. One of the few times we had a scoop because the statement was in Russian, and nobody could understand except me so I reported it out of Mogadishu before the press got it.

Towards the end of my time in Somalia, that is to say in December of 1974, the drought began to get real serious. The Somalis asked the Soviets and a variety of other people for help. I knew they were going to ask for assistance. I was sure they were going to ask us but they had not, so I told Washington I thought they would. And sure enough they did then call me down, and asked me for assistance, and using the ambassadorial authority that we have for emergencies, I was able to commit $25,000, as it then was, right away. The disaster relief people in the Department had a ship en route--one of many, I guess--to India with some civil defense biscuits, biscuits that had been stored in civil defense shelters in the United States.

Q: *For 20 years.*

KIRK: That's right, and they turned this ship around and it arrived at Mogadishu harbor about 7 or 8 days after the Somalis had requested this assistance. This was by far the most rapid assistance that anyone had produced. There was one problem. I went out to the ship, was hoisted aboard in a breeches buoy because there was no dock, as you know.

Q: *Yes, I've made that trip.*

KIRK: ...and was given one of these things to taste. It tasted perfectly awful. I said, "My God, what are we doing?" Well, it turned out, either by accident or deliberately, this particular biscuit had been lying in the scuppers for about a week. But I got another one and it tasted fine, like a graham cracker would. The speed with which we got things there was truly impressive, to me as well as to the Somalis. I think this had a contribution to make-- who knows how much--to their eventual turning back to the United States because we were the one country that delivered, and delivered fast.

Q: *Well, we had done that in a similarly small scale when I was there, and I was even*

congratulated by the Soviet ambassador. He was preparing other devices. Were you able to get around East Africa at all, or were you pretty well confined?

KIRK: Betty and I visited in Addis. The troubles were just starting and we were told that we should not leave the embassy compound. We were there for 3 or 4 days but it hadn't gotten really bad. And we visited in Nairobi, and to our great pleasure we were able to persuade our Chargé in both places to visit us in Mogadishu. It seemed much harder to go from Nairobi or Addis to Mogadishu than the reverse, but we did persuade them to come and we had some good exchanges on policy.

Q: *We did somewhat the same. We planned to travel quite a bit but you must have needed to much more than we did, and probably were able to get away less in some respects.*

KIRK: We did go on one safari--oh, I guess you wouldn't call it that in Somalia--with the CONOCO people.

Q: *CONOCO was still there?*

KIRK: CONOCO was there. We knew the police would give us heavy coverage so we asked them to send a police guard with us, which they did. Each place we went we accumulated another one until finally we were a party of 20 or 30, about 20 of whom were Somali police of various forms and another.

A couple of things there that struck me about the Somali experience. One, we had--and he may have been there when you were there--a former Olympic athlete who was helping African nations generally with their athletic programs, and a man who was a basketball coach. I thought it was kind of a funny thing for the American government to be funding. But this basketball coach was teaching the sons of the elite of the ruling Council. He was a very outgoing kind of person and he did more for the United States reputation in Somalia than anybody else, as far as I'm concerned. He had much more contact, albeit of a limited nature, with the people who were running the country than I did. I thought it was a very good idea. He was a very intelligent, personable, black man, and he was really just excellent. I thought that was a very useful program.

The other thing is, at receptions occasionally--not at our house because Somalis could not come--but in other places a Somali would come over to me very quietly and say, "I spent three or four weeks in your country on a visitors program and it was one of the most exciting and wonderful weeks of my life. I just wanted you to know that," and then would sidle away. I think that kind of program is very useful in laying seeds that will bear fruit perhaps years or even decades later.

Q: *The problem is to get them to go back.*

KIRK: Well, that's right,

ARTHUR W. HUMMEL, JR.
Ambassador
Ethiopia (1975-1976)

Ambassador Arthur W. Hummel, Jr. was born to American parents in China in 1920. He received his master's degree from the University of Chicago. His career with USIS included assignments in Hong Kong, Japan, Burma, and Taiwan. He served as the ambassador to Burma, Ethiopia, and Pakistan. Ambassador Hummel was interviewed by Dorothy Robins-Mowry on July 13, 1989.

Q: Was there any question about Kagnew Station? How to deal with the future status of Kagnew Station was always the problem in the Horn of Africa and was involved in the Somalia issue. It was something like the question of Greece and Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean. We found ourselves in the middle in terms of giving aid and so forth. Kagnew Station was long considered an absolute, strategic "must" in the area. It was essentially a communications station, for the purpose of eavesdropping and also relaying messages. Had you talked to our military and gotten any feel as to whether this station was becoming outmoded at that time because of the existence of satellite communications systems?

HUMMEL: No. It was after my time in Ethiopia that the U. S. military began to admit, very reluctantly, that maybe, conceivably, they could get along without Kagnew Station. Later on, of course, the Ethiopian Government under Mengistu shut it down. At the time the station was shut down, there were alternatives available for all of the missions which you mentioned--eavesdropping, humint, human intelligence gathering, communications relay, and the support of space flight.

Q: When you went to Ethiopia were you told that Kagnew Station was vital?

HUMMEL: That's right. It was considered vital.

Q: Were there any questions on the State Department side regarding Kagnew Station?

HUMMEL: No, not that I recall. I think that many of us took the military's insistence that Kagnew Station was vital with a grain of salt because we know the propensity of our military to exaggerate these matters. They exaggerate for their own reasons because they think that the wishy-washy, striped pants State Department might give away facilities of this kind too easily. So they err on one side and we may sometimes err on the other.

Q: How did you deal with the Derg when you arrived? Could you go and talk to any of them?

HUMMEL: Sure. I could easily get appointments whenever I needed them. They wanted to be friendly to the United States. They considered Somalia a serious threat to their security, as indeed it was, in view of the Soviet position there. They considered this a threat and therefore they were drawn to try to work out a modus vivendi with the United States so as to get continuing aid, both

civilian and military.

Q: Since the Soviets were arming the Somalis, were we in a position where we felt that we had to arm the Ethiopians?

HUMMEL: Yes. We wanted to be a military counterweight.

Q: During the time you were there relations weren't tense, as they became later on.

HUMMEL: No. The Ethiopian Army was under pressure, not only from the Eritrean rebellion in the North, but also from continued incursions from Somalia. To this day the Somalis, I believe, have written into their constitution--insofar as Somalia has any constitution left--the need to reclaim the Ogaden area, which belongs to Ethiopia. Somalia also has a claim to part of Kenya.

Q: Yes, the five stars of the Somali flag represent Djibouti, Ogaden, Kenya, the former British Somaliland, and the former Italian Somaliland. It's an "aggressive" constitution, you might say.

Back in 1960-1961 I was the INR specialist on the Horn of Africa. Everything there was a "zero sum" game, so to speak. If we helped Somalia, the Ethiopians got mad. The contention then was that Somalia could always be "bought." How were your relations with our Embassy in Mogadishu? Did you get together from time to time?

HUMMEL: Yes, we did, and that's one of the things that I'm proud of. As far as I know, I invented this idea of having a mini Chiefs of Mission conference, originated in the field, among Ambassadors, only inviting Washington at the last minute. I did this again when I was Ambassador in Pakistan and we had meetings of the American Ambassadors to South Asian countries. We would send messages laterally which were not repeated to Washington to make plans. I organized a U.S. Chiefs of Mission conference for Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, and Kenya, which we held in Nairobi.

After we'd settled on a date and place we would use our own travel funds, so we didn't have to ask Washington for that. Only a few weeks before the meeting we let Washington know that we were going to have this conference and would like to have some modest participation by the Department. I say "modest," because I'd been through the mill, when I was Ambassador to Burma and also as Acting Assistant Secretary for East Asian Affairs, of having these enormous Chiefs of Mission conferences. They were attended, not only by all of the Ambassadors in the Far East (not very many--only 13 or 14). The bad thing was that the Department of Defense would send at least five people and AID would send six people, USIA, CIA, Treasury, Agriculture and all. The whole room would be crowded with bystanders sent from Washington, many just for a junket. They probably learned something from what the chiefs of mission were saying, but the whole process was terribly cumbersome and prevented confidential dialogue. It was to avoid that kind of chiefs of mission conference that I set it as I did. As I recall, we only had two people from Washington--and both of them were appropriate and welcome, and from the State Department.

There was one very contentious issue that eventually divided us in Nairobi. I flatly refused to

participate in discussion of it. It involved something that had been in the American press--about aid to a rebel in Angola. The Ambassador to Kenya, a political appointee who was, I thought, quite naive, was trying to get us to send a message to Washington saying that the United States should withdraw support for that program.

Q: What about your views on American policy toward Somalia? Was Somalia considered a "write-off" at that time?

HUMMEL: Yes. It's a little bit odd, considering what we did later. However, Somalia was considered a "write-off" because the Soviets were deploying such substantial assets there. After I left Ethiopia the story of how the Soviets neatly switched their client relationship from Somalia to Ethiopia, while we took on Somalia as a client, has never really been told. It should be, because it is a rather astonishing sequence of events in the Cold War.

Q: At the time you were there, were we concerned about the far left in Ethiopia?

HUMMEL: Yes, we were. However, we thought--at least I thought, mistakenly--that the weight and political center of gravity of the Derg itself would prevent a communist takeover. There was also the fact that the main enemy of Ethiopia, Somalia, was Marxist-oriented and supported by the Soviet Union. We felt that this would deter any internal shift toward Marxism in Ethiopia because the Ethiopians were so conscious of what was happening in Somalia. It turned out that it didn't work out that way at all. Mengistu was able to jerk the whole system around to a really silly and extreme, Marxist mode.

JOHN L. LOUGHRAN
Ambassador
Somalia (1975-1978)

Ambassador Loughran was born in New Jersey on May 27, 1921. He received a bachelor's degree from Lehigh University and his master's form Harvard. He served as a captain in United States Marine Core from 1942 to 1946. His career in the foreign service includes post at Paris, Monrovia, Bathurst, and Dakar. He was interviewed by Horace G. Torbert in 1988.

LOUGHRAN: Early in 1975, I was offered the post of Somalia as chief of mission. I can still remember Ambassador Mulcahy's facial expression when he showed me Dr. Kissinger's nominating document (as far as the State Department was concerned, I was the choice). There were not any political appointees under consideration for Mogadishu. I smiled and Mulcahy, a fellow Irishman, said, "Why in the good Lord's name would you want to go to that forsaken place?"

I replied, "Ed, I think there's something to be learned about a whole new area. That's why I would like to go there."

And he said, "My God, I knew you were Irish, but I never thought you were stupid." (Laughs)

Q: *This was 1975 that you were assigned there. How did your wife take this? Was she eager?*

LOUGHRAN: Kathy was certainly a good soldier. I must go back a little bit, because an old acquaintance and a good friend, Martin Hillenbrand, had suggested that he would be interested in having me as his consul general in Munich. Having had four years in Germany, we certainly knew and had many, many friends in that area.

Q: *Munich is a great job.*

LOUGHRAN: An ambassadorship was not necessarily her goal in East Africa, and to have finished a career as consul general in Munich was most appealing to Kathy. But nonetheless, she went along with a pleasant smile on her face, and I think after the four years there, wound up loving the post as much as I did.

Q: *Mogadishu was a greatly different place when you got there than when I was there. I went there when we were still kings of the mountain. You went there after we'd been way down in the trough and, I guess, were starting to come up again. Do you want to describe the atmosphere as you found it and the problems in our relations and so on with Mogadishu? What was the status of relationships with the Soviets, for example, when you went there?*

LOUGHRAN: We were certainly odd man out, of all the Western embassies assigned there. I've never been in Moscow. All I could think of was it had to have been the worst post in East Africa and probably worse than those that served in Moscow during the time of Stalin. All of the embassies were under 24 hour surveillance by Somalis who were trained by experts: the KGB and East German intelligence services, and Czechs, Romanians, and others who were experts in developing listening devices placed in embassies. To have the residence continually bugged--every room--and attempts to have the embassy itself bugged, went on 24 hours a day. We were not allowed to travel more than 25 kilometers from the center of Mogadishu.

I guess the word that describes this more than anything else was "frustration." Certainly I was privileged to have the confidence and respect of Mohammed Siad Barre and his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Omar Arteh, a teacher from the north and a distinguished gentleman, whom I could see at any time, night or day, much to the consternation of the Soviets, who didn't want me to have two minutes with Mohammed Siad Barre. But since we both know the Somalis, there's nobody that's ever going to tell a Somali how he's going to run his business. Siad ran it his way. But it was a frustration for our mission, and when you have a few people who are assigned to an African post, who didn't want to be assigned there in the first place, but go because they're good people the morale factor becomes a major consideration.

There was absolutely no access at the economic, commercial, or consular level to Somalis. As a matter of fact, there was round-the-clock surveillance of the front door of the embassy. Any Somali entering the embassy was picked up when he came out and taken for interrogation. There

were very few that ever came to our Embassy.

Fortunately, we had a tremendous asset in our USIS reading room. Intelligence officials did not interdict Somalis from entering USIS and we maintained a large library with a good selection of journals, magazines, basic books on political theory, economic theory, and the culture of America, as well as many books on Africa. The reading room was filled to capacity 10, 12, 14 hours a day.

Q: *Were you able to give any sort of talks or anything of that sort in the library? Was that possible at all?*

LOUGHRAN: Nothing. Before the Russians were thrown out, my wife Kathy, an artist and portrait painter had done a lot of sketching in Somalia at our beach house which was a godsend to us, because we did have a little bit of freedom.

Q: *It was to us, but it must have been much more so to you, because you didn't have much else.*

LOUGHRAN: We certainly used it extensively. Kathy would paint Somali ladies who were selling baskets even though they were interdicted from dealing with Americans. They would pose outside of the beach house and she would paint them. Kathy completed 40 or 50 portraits during that period and exhibited them in the information section of the USIS offices across the street from the embassy. The exhibit was well received by the Somalis, well attended by numerous ministers, and given appropriate recognition by the Voice of Mogadishu.

You probably remember when Mohammed Siad Barre, who didn't make any great friends with the Arab League, permitted a Lufthansa plane, which had been hijacked in Spain, to land at Mogadishu. The history is well known. The Germans had a crack anti-terrorist unit which knew the access points on all major aircraft flying international routes. They were able land directly behind the Lufthansa 707 without the hijackers' knowledge. They ignited a long fuse in front of the nose of the hijacked airplane which ran to the end of the runway; all the hijackers aboard the 707 attracted to the cockpit to see what this was all about. Instantaneously, the Germans blew the hinges, entered, and disposed of the hijackers. The only loss was a member of the crew who had been murdered in Bahrain or Jeddah.

United States Embassy officers were given access to the airport with our walkie-talkies. The entire operation was coordinated with the German chargé whose communications with Bonn had been interdicted; he used our facilities. It was a highly successful activity I can't take credit for this whatsoever, except that I went to the minister of communications, who said, "If you have the equipment, be our guest. You are allowed freedom of movement anyplace on this airport." The Germans, of course, were thrilled with this. It was one of the great success stories of my mission, but well trained specialists did the work.

Q: *Did that have any negative repercussions? Did they have to compensate by being tougher on you afterwards?*

LOUGHRAN: No.

It was shortly after that, at the end of the Ogaden war, that the Russians departed from Somalia. Prior to their exodus and at a meeting in Aden Siad Barre told an assembly of chiefs of state of nations in the area who were aligned with the USSR that he would never consider interdicting international shipping operation out of and through the Red Sea," I think this really made the Russians realize that a continued productive relationship with Somalia was impossible, whereas consolidating their influence in Ethiopia was the preferred policy.

There are people to this day who doubt that this was the reason that Siad withdrew his troops from the Ogaden war with Ethiopia. I think he already knew of the tremendous Russian airlift of a billion dollars' worth of arms to Ethiopia. Siad, as soon as he heard this, had given the order to pull back his troops, which had already taken Harar, Jigjiga, and could have gone all the way to Addis, but Mohammed said Barre was not a stupid man. He knew that once those arms had arrived, his forces would have been massacred and much as his colonels and generals opposed his decision when the pull-out order was given, they withdrew to Somalia. The rest is history.

We are now a formidable pressure in Somalia and the Russians are in Ethiopia in force along with the Cubans. I think that Mengistu is aware that it's not very comfortable to have the arms of the bear of Moscow around you. I do not believe that he is tormenting genocide which some people say is taking place. If you read the popular press (the Atlantic has a recent story about genocide), I can not conceive of an Ethiopian doing what everybody purports he is doing. I could be wrong. Relief agencies and the intelligence agencies seem to say that this is exactly what's happening. They are going to regain the territory controlled by the EPLF in Eritrea, because access to the sea is vital. The railroad through Djibouti is certainly operating, but 90% of the Djiboutians are Somalis. So it remains the same problem that it was in your days, Mr. Ambassador.

Q: *And probably will remain long after we're both gone.*

LOUGHRAN: I think so.

Q: *And the next generation, too.*

LOUGHRAN: There's some serious talk that Mohamed Siad Barre has met with Mengistu and that are putting out peace feelers. Whether, in fact, this is accurate or not, I don't know. I hesitate to go into the Department anymore. I'm out of it, but I'm still interested.

Q: *The switchover occurred before you left Somalia.*

LOUGHRAN: Yes, it did.

Q: *Did that change your working relations considerably, or was it a very slow process?*

LOUGHRAN: It was a very slow process. Certainly all officers commenced to have access to

their counterparts in the government. Our AID friends in Washington moved swiftly. We were able to divert a ship in the Indian Ocean en route to Bangladesh, and provide some immediate assistance as an in earnest of our intentions. Somali hopes were, of course, total replacement by American equipment similar to what the Russians had provided. That was not--and continues not to be to this day--our intention, and, I think, correctly so. It's the last thing in the world that the Somalis need. They need rational assistance in the economic field so that they can continue to develop by their own ways.

As you know, probably more than I do, since you were able to travel so much and I never was, Somalis are an incredible people: gifted linguists; remarkable human beings; terribly hard to know, but once you do know them and you're accepted, I think there's a mutual respect and a mutual give and take. As poets, they have few peers in the world at large. As you know, they never adopted an orthography until 1972, and when I think of the thousands who mastered the Koran verbatim, it borders on being unbelievable.

Q: *And recited their ancestors for 2,000 years, that sort of thing.*

LOUGHRAN: Exactly.

Q: *Incredible. Has the literacy rate in Somalia increased considerably or only a little?*

LOUGHRAN: UNESCO reportedly examined this and found that when Somalis closed down the schools for two years and sent everybody to the field with chalk and blackboards and radio receivers, that they did, in a period of five years, go from a 12-16% literacy rate to an 86% literacy rate. The Somalis that I know, having been back four times since retirement, and having the privilege of traveling anywhere in the country, would say it certainly is well over 50%. Exactly how high it is, I have no way of judging. But I think it is one of the most remarkable achievements of any country in Africa.

Q: *A great thing. How did you come to leave Somalia and get back to the Department again?*

LOUGHRAN: Through normal transfer procedures. I was assigned to the African Bureau's Public Affairs Office and spoke to many students at colleges, high schools, and others throughout the United States. At the end of 1979 and with 37 years of government service, I elected to retire.

Looking back, I can assure you that the United States Diplomatic Service is a unique service. I hope in the future, as so many people have stated in Op Ed pieces in various newspapers that we will have the best Foreign Service in the world. Sometimes I think we are our own worst enemies. I think it's going to change. I hope it will, because I think it's vitally necessary in the years ahead to have a Service with that word underlined. It means what we all know it means--service to our country, to our President, and to our fellow citizens.

WILLIAM C. HARROP

Principal Deputy, Office of African Affairs
Washington, DC (1977-1980)

Ambassador William C. Harrop was born in Maryland in 1929. He graduated with an A.B. in English literature from Harvard University. Prior to his entrance into the Foreign Service in 1954, he served in the U.S. Marine Corps and studied journalism for a year at graduate school at the University of Missouri. In addition to serving as ambassador to Guinea, Zaire, Kenya, and Israel, Ambassador Harrop held earlier positions in Italy and Brussels. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on August 24, 1993.

HARROP: The revolution in Ethiopia had occurred in 1974. [Colonel] Mengistu came to power -- a very bloodthirsty ruler and a very harsh man, in some respects not unlike Sekou Toure, who tried to impose communism or his own brand of socialism on a society which didn't really understand it. The Soviets had been gaining major influence in Somalia for several years. Some time in late 1975 or early 1976 the Somalis invaded the Ogaden area [of Ethiopia] and tried to take back what they regarded as part of their historical territory. A bitter war ensued between Ethiopia and Somalia, with the Soviets switching sides to support Somalia, militarily. The Ethiopians were operating, to a large extent, with American arms which we had provided to Emperor Haile Selassie. It was a major war and quite costly in terms of casualties. It was a very delicate and difficult challenge for the Carter administration, because in this case there was a juxtaposition of the usual, Cold War considerations. The situation did not easily fit our Cold War attitudes. It was a fascinating period.

Q*: What were we after? What were we doing there, outside of watching these two adversaries fight over a...*

HARROP: We had several different purposes. One was to reduce or oppose Soviet influence, in both countries. The Soviets were caught in a very bad position. Actually, at the outset they were supporting both sides. They had been behind Siad Barre's regime in Somalia, but after the revolution in Ethiopia they were very close to Mengistu, an avowed Marxist. This war began, as I say, with American weapons in Ethiopian hands. Soon after, the Soviets were providing the arms to both sides. In the end they chose to support Ethiopia over Somalia. They drew back from Siad Barre. We were then in the quandary of trying to decide if we were going to support this opportunistic fellow [Siad Barre] who was certainly the aggressor, against the Ethiopians. We resisted the impulse to provide large scale military help to Somalia but we tried very hard to negotiate a settlement. We wanted to see Soviet influence diminished, we wanted to see the influence of communism diminished in both countries, and we wanted to see stability in the area. It was undesirable to have another conflagration going on in Africa. We wanted to see longer term economic development of the two countries, which we saw as being in our interest, both economically and politically.

In February, 1978, I took part in a rather remarkable trip. By that time the Somalis were being pushed back out of the Ogaden and we were close to a negotiated cease-fire between Somalia and Ethiopia. [Zbigniew] Brzezinski's deputy as National Security Adviser in the Carter

administration was David Aaron, who is now, under the Clinton administration, Ambassador to the OECD [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development] in Paris. Aaron led a mission to see Mengistu. It was the first contact between the American government and the new Ethiopian government. This was four years after it [the new Ethiopian government] came into power. I went on that trip, along with the National Security Council expert on the Horn of Africa, Paul Henze:, who previously had been assigned there. In fact, he wrote a book about Ethiopia, called "Travels in Ethiopia." Henze, Aaron, and I went out on this trip. I was to represent the Department of State.

The three of us went to England, where we picked up a large aircraft, with only the three of us aboard. This U.S. Air Force plane flew us down from Heathrow Airport [London] to Ethiopia. We had a remarkable, four-hour meeting with Mengistu, trying to talk through a settlement. It was not entirely successful.

Q*: What was your impression of Mengistu?*

HARROP: I think that Mengistu presented more of a surface confidence than he actually felt. He was in a very correct and well-pressed, military uniform with polished boots. He was sitting in what had been the office of [Emperor] Haile Selassie, in Haile Selassie's palace. I was told that the office was unchanged, except for a prominent bust of Lenin which had been added in the corner. I had the same experience as a couple of members of Congress, whom I had spoken to a few weeks before -- Paul Tsongas of Massachusetts and Don Bonker of Washington. Tsongas was then a member of the House of Representatives. They had just returned from a visit to Ethiopia when I talked to them. They had been the first Americans of any official standing to call on Mengistu. Tsongas and Bonker told me that they had sat in that same room which I subsequently sat in, talking with Mengistu. They heard the late Emperor's lions roaring underneath. The late Emperor's office was cantilevered out over the grounds of the Palace zoo. The lions were growling beneath. Paul Tsongas said he couldn't help but wonder if Mengistu had a button that he could push there which would open the floor, and the visitors would fall down among the lions. I had the same feeling as I talked to Mengistu. We all heard the growling of those lions below us.

It was a long meeting. Mengistu was very difficult to reach. He really understood English pretty well but used the old trick of waiting for the interpreter every time. So the meeting dragged on. We didn't see much "yield" or much "give" from him. Subsequently, not too long afterwards, he did agree to stop the war which he had effectively won.

Q*: What were you trying to do at that point?*

HARROP: We were trying to get a cease-fire, trying to stop the war over the Ogaden. More specifically, we were actually trying to head off an Ethiopian occupation of Somalia. The Ethiopians had really broken through the Somali lines by that time and were in a position, I think, to sweep through to the sea. We were trying to talk them out of that. In the end they did not do it, to their great credit; they had said from the outset that they did not have territorial ambitions beyond the Ogaden. So it turned out that they did not advance beyond the Ogaden and into

Somalia.

Well, I don't have much else to say about Mengistu. I would say that he was an introverted, a closed man. You couldn't easily tell what he was thinking. He seemed to me to be less confident than he wanted to appear to be. This personal insecurity is a danger in a person like that, because he can lash out, as he repeatedly demonstrated that he could. I think that Mengistu is very fortunate to be alive today. He is living on a farm in Zimbabwe -- a very fortunate man to survive in view of all the people that he personally killed.

At any rate, I attended a number of quadripartite meetings in London, which seemed to be the headquarters for them, with the French, British, Italians, and Americans talking over our policies toward the [Ogaden] war. I followed that area closely for several years. It was a most interesting time to be doing that.

They were interesting meetings because the four powers had somewhat different purposes, I think. The British and Italians had some residual concern for Eritrea and Somalia, because of their former, colonial position there. In Italy the whole history of Ethiopia has been a kind of strange cultural and political phenomenon. There's a museum on Ethiopia and Eritrea in Rome. There's a little bit of German national guilt toward the holocaust in Italian thinking toward their historical role -- Mussolini's role, in fact -- in the Horn of Africa. The French participated in the talks because they're an important power, with a military presence in Djibouti, and because they want to be "in" on things. They saw a possibility for developing their influence. These were very interesting meetings, I must say. In the end there was pretty good cooperation among the four western powers because the overall purpose of all four was to reestablish stability and not have their other interests in Africa and their Cold War interests upended by this war.

Q*: How about the borders? You had Somalia, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Tanzania. Were we getting involved in...*

HARROP: There were continuing problems. With Tanzania there was no love lost between [Julius] Nyerere and [President] Moi, as you can imagine. The Tanzanians were trying to establish a socialist society, depicting Kenya as heartlessly corrupt and capitalist. Uganda was in turmoil with insurrection and continual warfare. The same thing could be said of the Sudan. There was a sense of complete hostility between Kenya and Siad Barre's Somalia, and then there was persistent marauding over the border by ethnic Somalis. There is some Kenyan admixture in the population of Somalia. There were tensions all the way around. The area in which we played the greatest role was in supporting a United Nations effort to mediate the historical problems among Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania -- the old East African Federation under the United Kingdom. There was a quite brilliant, former central banker from Switzerland, named Ulrich, a man for whom I have great admiration. Just as I was leaving he finally succeeded in negotiating out the interests of the three parties in the complicated common possessions of East African Community under the British regime. This led to a lessening of tension, with Tanzania opening the border with Kenya. The border was closed almost the whole time that I was there. You couldn't easily travel across the border to Tanzania.

HARIADENE JOHNSON
USAID, Office Director for East Africa
Washington, DC (1977-1982)

Hariadene Johnson received a bachelor's degree and a master's degree from University of Texas at Austin prior to joining USAID in 1967. Her career posts included Ghana, Liberia, Tanzania, and Djibouti in addition to serving as Office Director of East Africa for USAID from 1977-1982. Ms. Johnson was interviewed by W. Haven North in 1998.

Q: Let's go to Somali now. We cut out of Ethiopia and now we've started up in Somali.

JOHNSON: Actually, it wasn't that sequential; both had been happening at the same time. The Somali program was sort of started simultaneously almost with the Sudan program in '78, '79 and we begin to build up there, essentially.

Q: Was there a particular reason why we started up again? Was somebody pushing us?

JOHNSON: I just think it was hearsay more than anything else. The hearsay at the time was that there was a medical doctor who worked at the White House who had longstanding ties with some senior Somali people. He pushed the State Department; based upon his private contacts in Somali that the Somalians were fed up with the Russians and were trying to get the Russians out and would like to be on better terms with the U.S. So, essentially it was quote a "White House initiative", that sort of filtered through the National Security Council and the State Department. I think first, the Embassy expanded its contacts and started having more discussions and more contacts. Then, USAID was pushed and we sent a team out to Somali to have initial discussions with the government and the Somalis sent a team to Washington to have an initial discussion with us. I've never been so impressed in my life with the Somali team that came in to visit with us; extraordinarily intelligent, talented three man delegation. They probably spoke 15 languages between three people. They knew Italian, they knew Arabic, they knew English, they knew Russian, I mean just clearly at ease functioning in a European western world.

Q: Were they at the ministerial level?

JOHNSON: They were at the ministerial level. They were all fairly young. They were in their 30s. But, they gave an initial impression of people who had been thoroughly assimilated into the modern world. It was just a problem of bringing the rest of the population with them. I don't think anybody in Somali has been assimilated. They are the most tribal group I've ever run into. In fact, in my definition Ethiopians are extremely arrogant and that if you're not one of them just too bad, you know. Until I ran in to the Somalis. The Somalis are arrogant, more arrogant than the Ethiopians. They are easier to deal with, because their attitude is, well it's not your fault that you're not a Somalis; you don't count. But, they're polite and gracious and gentle about it. They had their first meeting in Washington with Golar Butcher; they had three projects that they

wanted us to do based upon things that USAID had previously done in Somalis They wanted us to complete the city sewer systems and they wanted the Somali city water works also.

Q: And in Mogadishu?

JOHNSON: In Mogadishu. They wanted us to repair and expand the port at Kismaayo which the U.S. had originally built under the U.S. Army Core of engineers and which was crumbling, because the mix of sand and cement was vulnerable to salt. Anyway, it was falling apart at the seams and they wanted us to come back and fix Kismaayo. The third was that they wanted to put up an industrial processing plant in the vicinity of Mogadishu.

Golar laid out for them that New Directions legislation had passed since we had previously been associated with Somali and now the effort was to reach the broad number of people, rather than to do city industrial types of projects. So, Somali said, oh they understood and thanked us very much and went away and came back three days later and they had three new projects they wanted us to do. They wanted us to do a project for the health of the poor majority, which involved fixing the city water works. They wanted us to provide income to small farmers who grew peanuts by providing an industrial processing plant that could take the peanuts and make oil out of them. And, they wanted us to help the small agricultural farmers who were dependent upon the port They completely understood the legislation. I think they probably got a briefing from Congress in the meantime the two days they were gone, because they came back and they had the same three projects wrapped around the New Directions legislation.

Q: So, what did you do?

JOHNSON: We thanked them very much for their interest and we said that we would wait until our team came back from Somalia. It was really simultaneously that we had a team out there and they had a team in here. Our team in Somali was looking at livestock projects. I think we got Public Administration projects, but I'm not really sure. We had an agriculture project with the University and a Research Station. And, again as in Sudan, we had been in Somali before and kept the port at Mogadishu from crumbling. It was hard to find lasting evidence of anything that USAID had done, except for the people. You had people show up who had been trained at the University of Wyoming in livestock and they were working at the agriculture ministry throughout the university. You had people from the University of California. Again and again throughout the government, you had people who had been trained in the United States and it was the most lasting impact of whatever we tried to do out there in the '50s, I guess. Again, you had to start things quickly. There were enough remnants of the USAID programs to where we tried to go back and sort of expand, build on, see what capacity was still was there and then build on that capacity. So, you wound up in health projects, agricultural projects, eventually wound up at Kismaayo port, kicking and screaming and dragging our heels the whole way.

Q: And the Mogadishu water system?

JOHNSON: We never did get back to the Mogadishu water system and we never did the oil processing plant. The two rivers in Somali, the Shabelle River and, I can't remember the other

one (the Juba ed). The biggest area of contention over projects done and not done was that the Somali's wanted a dam over the Shabelle which would regulate floods and theoretical open up a whole section of the country for irrigation. There were a number of studies that were inconclusive.

Q: Did the projects like the health one work?

JOHNSON: We weren't there long enough to tell. We wound up with the Somalia situation deteriorating and we were out of there in eight years, I think.

Two funny stories. Art Buchwald did one of his humorous essays on what was happening in Ethiopia and Somalia, which involved the U.S. pulling out of Ethiopia and going to Somalia, and the Russians pulling out of Somali and going to Ethiopia. At the same time the two countries were engaged in war against each other. The Ethiopians entire Air Force consisted of U.S. planes, which the Russians couldn't provide spare parts for. So, the Russians went to North Vietnam and bought North Vietnam's spare parts that had been left behind when the U.S. pulled out of Vietnam and provided them to the Ethiopians. In the meantime, we were sitting in Somalia and we had exactly the same problem and they had all the Russian equipment and we couldn't provide anything that helped, so we went to the Egyptians and the Egyptians provided Russian equipment that the Russians had left when they pulled out of Egypt.

I remember reading that column and saying, what's funny about this. This is from just reading a newspaper, because the two countries were so intertwined with each other with a history of being on the other side of the Cold War fight, that it was impossible to walk through that complex without tripping over some law that said, you weren't supposed to be doing what you were doing. That ranged from, there's a section of legislation which says that you cannot give assistance to two countries if the two countries are engaged in aggression against one another. The State Department told me not to worry. The U.S. never signed a convention of 1832, which defined a Russian. So, if push came to shove and anybody wanted to protest, not to protest.

But, I think the other funny story about the Somalians was, they wound up with a Presidential visit, where the President of Somalia came to the White House and had official meetings with Carter and had one in the afternoon where USAID people were supposed to go over to Blair House and have this long talk with him. There were about 15 people from USAID who went and it was headed up by Maurie Williams, the Deputy Administrator. There was a sort of a horseshoe shaped arrangement with all the Americans sitting one side and Somalis sitting on the other. The question of the Shabelle River dam and why the U.S. wouldn't fund it. So, Maurie Williams tried to give an explanation. He'd been working on all these briefing papers for two weeks about why we shouldn't do it. So, he tried to give an explanation and the President of Somali just wouldn't accept it. So, the end result of it was that Maurie Williams passed it to the guy who was sitting next to him, he passed it to the guy who was sitting next to him, and it ended up with me who was the most junior person in the room at the end of the row and he said, "Miss Johnson, would you like to reply?

Q: And what did you say?

JOHNSON: At that point I looked at Maurie Williams who previously had been trying to offer a compromise of saying well, let's not say we can't do it. Let's just say that the timing is wrong for us to do it and that sometime in the future maybe we'll do it. I had argued in my really strong briefing papers and all the rest of it that this was a misleading signal that was sending us down the wrong path, etc. etc. and Maurie stuck to that. Instead I said, well I don't think the time is right, right now. Fairly quickly after that everybody got up and left. So, all the Americans filed by the Somali side of this horseshoe shaking hands and saying good-bye and, so I ended up at the last of the line as the most junior person there. So, there I was shaking hands with the President while everybody else, every other person had passed by and left me with Somalis who totally surrounded me. They had become convinced that I was the key person. It took me 20 minutes to get out of the Blair House.

Q: They thought you had saved the day.

JOHNSON: The Somalis had correctly identified me as the bottleneck and, if they could convince me, it would be ok.

Q: I see. So, they didn't buy the, not now, later argument?

JOHNSON: Yes. I had it all. They wanted it now.

Q: Where did you come off with them then at that point?

JOHNSON: I mumbled everything I could think of under the sun that I had put in to the briefing paper. That the World Bank had done two evaluations, two preliminary project assessments, you know, had come to the conclusion that the proposed dam would not accomplish what they wanted to in terms of agriculture. I quoted every anthropologist that I could come up with, that putting up a dam and controlling water does not increase the amount of water that is available. It seasonally regulates what is available, but you don't get more water. Their problem was that the Shabelle River didn't get enough water. I forget what other argument I made; every argument in the kitchen sink that I could come up with.

Q: Did we ever do anything with it?

JOHNSON: We ended up doing another World Bank study where the U.S. and the World Bank would together do a feasibility study of what made sense. That drug it out for another two years. I think we did some more feasibility studies for the dam and then wound up, as you know, with the situations and relations deteriorating. The availability of funds was becoming much more of a constraint, so it ended.

Q: Back in Somalia?

JOHNSON: Somalia again; I can't claim that we didn't know Ethiopia. We had had 20 years of experience in Ethiopia and I think in Ethiopia the added deterioration and eventually the pulling

out of the USAID people just recognized the political reality that we'd supported Haile Selassie for too long and the new Council of Ministers saw us as being bad people, and that the Soviets would provide the goods.

But, in Somalia again, we went in and we had too much money to spend fast, we didn't know enough about the country. We wound up antagonizing the State Department because we wanted to do feasibility studies. The quickest thing we could do was to build on what we had done before, whether good, bad or indifferent or if it still made sense, it was within the realm of what we could do, like the agricultural research center. Although, we did the Mogadishu water works. We wound up in Somalia. It's not because they're sophisticated, but they're really settled and they're use to the politics that go on between 16 warring clans and the affiliations and the sub-affiliations and the negotiating. It was like throwing us, (you know, the baby in the bed) into this horrendously sophisticated society where we thought it was the other way around. We thought we were sophisticated and that they were the pastoral nomadic tribe. I think they took us to the cleaners, personally. We went back, but we never really understood the internal politics of what was going on in that country.

Q: As I recall, at the Africa Bureau in State compared it to other African countries; Somalia was one country where there was one language, one culture, and tribal society, and therefore we didn't have this risk of internal conflicts. Is that a fair statement as to what you understood?

JOHNSON: Yes, it was part of my briefing papers. Part of this story was floating around Washington. It was essentially that you did have an ethnically, homogenous group that saw itself as a nation. It was a clan, you know, with clans within a nation, but they did see themselves as a nation. The Somali language not only existed, but previously, about ten years before, they had made a major decision to turn it in to a written language and preserve their heritage and their culture. You just seemed to have so many things going for it that the problems that you would anticipate going into Sudan where the country was just territorially split in so many different ways, the Somalis looked like they really had their act together.

We also had a fairly sophisticated policy dialogue going on with the Somali government in terms of getting them to change a lot of the policies that they'd adapted during the Russian period. I remember very early in the process, the IMF and the IBRD had teams out in Somalia along with our initial teams for reestablishing relationships. I was along on TDY and I remember having coffee with a guy from the IMF. And, I was full of excitement and energy about what we were pushing on, the different policy issues and he just looked at me. I think he was Italian. He just looked at me with a sort of totally weary look. He said, "Don't you understand?" He said, "It doesn't matter what policy the Somalis adopt. They don't have any institutional capacity to carry any of them out." I said, "Whoa."

Q: What was the observation from IMF.

JOHNSON: Yes, and it's partly because the IMF brought it up that we did do more institutional development. We had more teams going out looking at the institutional capacity and the strengthening it . I did get involved in a public administration project. I was sort of looking at

that side of the equation which because of the whole New Directions for us we hadn't really been involved.

Q: Right, right. Interesting. But, then at that time people were not aware, did not sense the potential for the country breaking apart and the clan warfare; it was not anticipated by anybody.

JOHNSON: We didn't hit any of that. My theory was that it was there but that we simply weren't sophisticated enough to know what was going on. And, that when we went back in the '78, '79 time period, we went in with other donors so that essentially there were enough donor resources flowing to all the different groups that they could be bought off. With an ever increasing pie, you get a larger piece of the pie and so the tensions that were under the surface simply didn't surface.

DONALD K. PETTERSON
Ambassador
Somalia (1978-1982)

Ambassador Donald Petterson was born in California in 1930. Petterson served in the US Navy for four years before graduating from the University of California Santa Barbara. Petterson joined the Foreign Service in 1960 and has served overseas in Mexico, Tanzania, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa and as ambassador to Somalia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and Sudan. In Washington, DC Petterson served on the Policy Planning Staff and as a deputy assistant secretary in the African Bureau. Ambassador Petterson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy and Lambert Heyniger in 1996.

PETTERSON: In November 1978 Julie, John and I left for Mogadishu. Because the international school there only went through the eighth grade, Susan and Julianne went to boarding schools in New England.

I presented my credentials to Somali President Mohamed Siad Barre a week after our arrival. Siad had ruled Somalia since he seized power in a military coup in 1969. He had aligned Somalia closely with the Soviet Union. Life for American diplomats in Sudan in the ensuing years was not easy, given the often hostile environment set by Siad and his government. The Soviets poured in massive military aid, and the Somali army became one of the largest and best equipped in all of Africa.

Somalia had always claimed that the Ogaden region of eastern Ethiopia was Somali territory. In 1977, Ethiopia had become very much weakened by internal political upheaval. Siad saw this as an opportunity and he invaded the Ogaden. The Soviets were not happy. They had been angling for closer ties with the Marxist military regime in Addis Ababa. They saw that Ethiopia was more important in Africa than Somalia. So Siad and they had a falling out, and he threw out the Soviet military advisory team and did other things to make life a bit tough for the Soviets. Their embassy staff was scaled back considerably.

Soon the Ethiopian military got the upper hand. The Soviets had, by then, been providing the Ethiopians with military equipment. The Cubans intervened militarily and actually had people on the ground helping the Ethiopian army fight the Somalis. All this turned the tide against the Somali army. It was defeated and withdrew most of its forces from the Ogaden in early 1978. Later that year, President Carter agreed in principle to forge closer ties with Somalia, if Siad Barre would get the rest of his army of the Ogaden. With the Soviets firmly ensconced in Ethiopia, the Carter administration wanted to prevent them from extending their influence further in the Horn of Africa. The administration was wary of the duplicitous Siad Barre, but the enemy of my enemy is my friend.

Q: [Laughter]

PETTERSON: The United States had no economic stake in Somalia. This was, after all, a country mainly of herdsmen and whose major export was live animals – camels, goats, and sheep. It had no mineral wealth and no commercial ties of any significance with the United States. Its importance, or perceived importance, stemmed entirely from a Cold War context, the concern about Soviet designs for the Horn. In 1979, Soviet aggression in Afghanistan gave rise to fears that it would expand its military presence into the northwest Indian Ocean area. As a result, Somalia took on additional importance because of the American need for Middle Eastern oil and Somalia's position at the entrance of the Red Sea and along the two sea-lanes to the Persian Gulf.

When I got to Mogadishu, the years of Somalis' distrust of and hostility toward the United States had given way to friendly relations. However, as I have said, Washington was wary of Siad, who had shown time and again that he was not a man to be trusted. The administration agreed to give him a modest amount of non-lethal military aid if he would withdraw all of his forces from the Ogaden. He said he would do it. Well, for almost the next three years, the leitmotif of my talks with Siad was U.S. insistence that the Somalis had to get out of the Ogaden and Siad's insistence that they had nobody there. So it was a standoff, and we did not provide him with the military assistance he wanted or, for that matter, any military assistance at all for some time.

Q: I would suppose that from overhead photography and intelligence we had a fairly good idea of whether Siad had any assets there or not. When you pointed out to him that he had assets there, and we knew that he did, what did he say? [Laughter]

PETTERSON: Well, that is precisely it. We had intelligence from overhead imagery and from other means to know that there were Somali army personnel fighting with the Western Somali Liberation Front in the Ogaden, no question about it. So I would say, "Mr. President, you must get out of the Ogaden."

He would say, "I'm not in the Ogaden."

"We know you're in the Ogaden!"

"How do you know?"

"I can't tell you that, but we know you're in the Ogaden."

Q: Yes.

PETTERSON: And so it went. He would invariably deny our allegation and ask for proof. Since proof was based on sensitive intelligence information, we never gave it to him.

Q: He wasn't getting any aid.

PETTERSON: He wasn't getting the aid he wanted. Siad was very accessible, and I met with him a lot. He liked to meet with ambassadors, certainly with the American ambassador. He was a night owl, so our meetings would generally take place late at night. I never quite got used to the way my car would be greeted at the gate of Siad's quarters. Armed soldiers would, as the car approached the gate to the compound where Siad worked, suddenly leap forward out of the darkness and level their weapons in our direction, yelling the Somali equivalent of "Halt!" Once, I took some American journalists to see him about midnight. I knew what was going to happen, but they didn't. When the guards pulled their usual routine, the journalists in my car literally almost hit the roof.

Q: [Laughter]

PETTERSON: I mean, they *[laughter]* were really shocked. My meetings with Siad were just about always very informal. We often would sit in a gazebo during the warm nights and drink lemonade or beer and talk for hours. This was clearly designed to woo me to his side, and I took great pains not to develop a case of "clientitis," as can happen to an ambassador. And I was always candid with him. One night he asked me why Washington didn't like him.

I said, "Mr. President, do you really want to know?"

"Yes, he replied."
"Well," I said, "It's because you lie so much to us."

Q: How long would these sessions last?

PETTERSON: Oh, sometimes two or three hours.

Q: Wow!

PETTERSON: There were times when, after a conversation, I would come home at two or three o'clock in the morning. I would sit down while everything was fresh in my mind and write my cable. I'd finish it maybe at the break of day or maybe it was still dark, go out for a run, and then come back [laughter], have a shower, eat breakfast, and go to work.

Q: [Laughter] Hwooh!

PETTERSON: I remember one night I went out for a run. Incidentally, I had no security guards in Somalia. I wasn't a fanatic about running, not by any means, but I had begun to run a fair amount. That night, I ran from my house, through town, out to the Marine house and back again. I think the whole thing was maybe six miles. At any rate, I was chugging along and went past the army air force barracks, which is right near the international airport. It's pitch dark, I'm running by, and I hear a voice. "Good evening, Mr. Ambassador."

Q: [Laughter]

PETTERSON: So they knew what I was doing. Maybe that was good.

Q: It wasn't Siad driving alongside you?

PETTERSON: No!

Siad warned that if we didn't give him help, the Ethiopians might overrun his country. He was always telling me about this or that air raid in northern Somalia. He would claim that the Ethiopians were on the verge of attacking, and admonished Washington for not helping him. He also played the Soviet card, stating that we had to help him in the effort to withstand Soviet expansionism.

But Washington held firm to the demand that he get out of the Ogaden. Siad's untrustworthiness and his unwillingness to get his military out of the Ogaden did not, however, preclude an expansion of U.S. economic assistance and humanitarian assistance to Somalia. One of my major efforts there was to keep the proliferating U.S. presence from getting too large. We'd had enough examples of too large an American presence and how it could redound to our detriment. Iran, for example.

Q: What did we have there? Did we have a tracking station there, or did we have a-

PETTERSON: No, we had a-

Q: Navy presence?

PETTERSON: No, no. We had a growing USAID presence, with an AID staff and American contractors for the various AID projects. The embassy staff wasn't all that large, but it was expanding too. The mission had, as well, a USIS office and a CIA station. And later, after a military aid agreement had been concluded, we would have a military assistance team. But it was the AID component that was the biggest element of the U.S. mission. Somalia became for a time the largest recipient of U.S. aid in sub-Saharan Africa. Most of this was humanitarian aid because of a huge refugee problem and drought. But our economic aid was growing year by year. I tried to keep our AID mission focused on the core of our program, which was in agriculture and primary health care. But AID had a tendency to want to get into new things and to need more people to do those new things. I opposed this.

Q: Did you have a good AID director?

PETTERSON: He seemed to be a good AID director, I thought. He knew his business. But he and I disagreed about the scope of the AID program. That was a professional disagreement, and it wasn't serious.

Another disagreement I with him and with AID in Washington was over the formation of a Joint Administrative Operation, called a JAO. The African Bureau, certainly Dick Moose, was championing the idea of Joint Administrative Operations, which would be more cost effective, require fewer personnel, and make sense from a management standpoint. AID/Washington was dead set against it. They wanted to continue to administer their own administration, to manage their own programs. We're not talking about the AID projects. We're talking about the administration of the entire U.S. mission program, of providing administrative support – maintenance, repairs, equipment, vehicles, supplies, all the administrative needs. Having two separate administrative systems, one for AID and another for the rest of the mission, was wasteful. I took up the cudgels on this and fought the battle, which eventually was lost in Washington.

My differences with the USAID director regarding the JAO question and the growth of the AID program were not a matter of serious discord between us. The problem arose when he began openly voicing to Somalis harsh criticism of the U.S. policy of not providing any military assistance as long as the Somali military were still in the Ogaden. He sympathized with Somalis' viewpoint. Fair enough. But it was not his place to tell the Somalis that American policy was ridiculous and to make ad hominem remarks about Assistant Secretary Moose and Secretary Vance. When I learned of this, I advised him to stop. He persisted. So, after a time I had no choice, in my mind, but to have him removed from the country. If there was a set bureaucratic procedure for doing this, I did not know it. I believed that I was properly exercising my authority as ambassador. Before I informed the AID director, I let the African bureau leadership know what I intended to do. They voiced no objection. I called the AID director in, told him he had to leave, notified Washington in a cable to State and to AID, and it was done. AID/Washington was not happy. Perhaps I should have done it differently, but the situation was intolerable.

Q: I don't know, but my experience has been that the ambassador is Mr. America abroad. He's the personal representative of the President.

PETTERSON: That's true.

Q: And he can send home anybody he wants.

PETTERSON: Yes, but in this day and age of grievances and lawsuits, I believe the authority of the ambassador has been reduced. Today it might not possible for an ambassador to do what I did.

AID was furious, and they sent out an emissary, Roy Stacy, to deal with me on this. Roy was a

well regarded officer who later became a deputy assistant secretary of state in the African Bureau. In the course of our conversation, referring to the AID director, Roy told me, "You know, Don, this happened to him once before in a southern African post, and he got bounced out."

I was incredulous. AID had known that and yet had made him a director again. They had done so because he was part of the AID "old boy net." Then, when he pulled the same thing again, they got on their high horse when I expelled him. Well, in any event, my decision stuck. I got a new AID director, Mike Adler, one of AID's best officers, who had been AID director in Nigeria and elsewhere. Mike was a wonderful man, and we quickly developed an excellent, cooperative working relationship.

So, 1979…impelled by the crises in Afghanistan Iran, in December the Carter administration decided to seek military access to Somali, Kenyan, and Omani ports and airfields. In Somalia, the Soviet-built airfield at Berbera, in the northern part of the country along the Red Sea, was the longest and best landing strip in the region. Washington believed it would be desirable to have access to it, and negotiations ensued.

They turned out to be protracted. We got what we wanted from the Kenyans and the Omanis relatively quickly, but for two reasons it took longer in Somalia. First, during the negotiations, it became clear again that Siad was still mucking around in the Ogaden. That held things up. Then negotiations almost broke down completely when Siad began making outlandish demands for billions of dollars of offensive American military weaponry. When the cooling of U.S. ardor for an agreement became apparent to Siad through his talks with me, he dropped his demands and accepted the U.S. proposal for a modest amount of Foreign Military Sales credits and economic support funds.

In August 1980 an agreement was signed. But then we detected that the Somalis were back in the Ogaden. The deal was off until a definitive Somali withdrawal from the Ogaden, which finally was verified at the end of the year.

Q: This is all before Diego Garcia?

PETTERSON: No, about the same time.

Siad would never get the amount or the kind of military aid that he wanted from us.

On the other hand, we never got what we were hoping for. We tried to talk him into reforming Somalia's state-run economy, which featured large, corrupt, inefficient state corporations. I tried to convince Siad to move toward a more market-oriented economy. But he was married to the old ideas, and he didn't do it, even though many of his advisors were urging him to do so. Those who urged too much found themselves in trouble, and some left the country. I was naive to think that we could convince Siad to do good things for the economic health of Somalia. I was even more naive to think that he would begin to open his country to a more democratic system. I thought we could convince him to do the right thing, but he remained a dictator and persisted in squelching

the rise of democratic freedoms.

In the cold war ethos of those days, however, those kinds of sins did not override what Washington regarded as the need for an anti-Soviet friend. The relationship was never that close, never what Siad wanted, and we never achieved what we wanted, but we had reasonably good relationship for some years. The bloom began to be off the rose in U.S.-Somali relations by the time I left, as the initial enthusiasm on both sides had begun to pall.

The fighting in the Ogaden and a severe drought in 1979 and 1980 produced a massive refugee population, as tens of thousands of people flocked into camps in northern Somalia. For a time, Somalia had the largest refugee population in the world. The U.S. humanitarian aid program grew, and we were the largest single donor to the substantial international aid effort. In 1981 the problem was made even worse by massive flooding. Rains broke the drought but were so heavy that they swelled the Shabeellee River to the point that thousands of people were isolated and rendered homeless by the flooding.

I spent a lot of my time on the AID problem and traveled to the refugee areas on a number of occasions. A major difficulty arose when Somali officials tried to dictate to the donors how the food aid would be delivered. If we had done what they wanted, a lot of the food and other humanitarian supplies would have been diverted. We wanted a system that would both relieve the growing congestion at the port and expedite the delivery of food. We also wanted monitors in place at the port, along the distribution route, and at the refugee camps. The Somalis fought against this. Phil Johnston, my friend from Sierra Leone who was now the executive director of CARE USA, came to Mogadishu to participate in talks. At one point, with the talks going nowhere, he was on the verge of leaving the country without an agreement. But we finally got the Somalis to agree that CARE would be the NGO that would provide the expertise needed both for the port operations and for delivery of the food supplies up-country. We also won the battle for sufficient monitoring. We regarded this as a major accomplishment. The new system wasn't perfect in its implementation, but it went a long way to improve the situation a great deal.

In 1981, President Reagan telephoned me and asked me to stay on as ambassador.

Q: That's nice!

PETTERSON: Yes, it was nice touch. Of course, I agreed, and Julie and I ended up staying there for a total of four years.

Q: Don't say "of course" so fast because, I mean, Mogadishu is really a tough post, and you'd been there for three years! Average temperature 110!

PETTERSON: Yes, it was tough, but we liked it. You know, we had lived in Africa most of our married life.

Q: Long time, yes.

PETTERSON: Three of our children were born there!

Q: You were used to warm weather. I understand it's really very hot in Somalia.

PETTERSON: Very hot, but not so bad along the coast. Mogadishu had coastal breezes that cooled the temperature. Sometimes the winds were a problem. Mogadishu is built on sand, and when the winds were strong, the sand was blown everywhere. But, again, we liked our life in Somalia.

Q: What did you do for fun out there? Are you a golfer or a tennis player?

PETTERSON: Tennis. I played tennis and I ran. In Mogadishu I ran for the first time with a group called the Hash House Harriers, which is internationally known. There are Hash groups in places as disparate as Somalia and Washington D.C. Hashing is less about serious running than it is about having a good time. A trail is laid, you run the trail, you're given misleading signals, and you circle back until you find the right trail again. In this way, the slowest runners or those who choose to walk will catch up with the people who are running hard. The idea is for everyone to finish the course at about the same time. When you finish this nonsense, you have some food, drink beer if you're in a country where beer is available, and sing silly songs. It was good harmless fun and a welcome diversion.

Q: [Laughter] Yes.

PETTERSON: Because Mogadishu lacked the amenities and diversions of a prosperous city, entertaining at home and being entertained by friends was the primary social outlet for the diplomats there. Our Western community, as we styled it, included ourselves, the British, French, Yugoslavs, and the [laughter] Chinese. By then, as you know, our relationship with China had changed enormously. My colleagues and I and our wives loved going to the Chinese because they served great Chinese food!

Q: [Laughter]

PETTERSON: There were no restaurants that we could go to in town.

Q: My image of Somalia is of a place sort of where opportunities for travel are not too good and opportunities for cultural diversion are not too good-

PETTERSON: That's true. You didn't travel for fun in Somalia. There were no accommodations to speak of, or they were very rudimentary. The roads were bad. The weather was bad. But my work dictated that I travel a lot, and I did by car and sometimes by air. It was never a pleasure.

But let me say again that we enjoyed being in Somalia. We had our friends and we had such things as tennis, the Hash, taking the children to the beach - to a beach that was safe. We couldn't go to the Lido beach in Mogadishu, right by our house, because the sharks posed an extreme danger. People were killed by sharks along Lido beach several times while we were there.

Occasionally we would go to Nairobi, where we would stay with our friends Bill and Ann Harrop. Bill was ambassador to Kenya at the time. Julie and I-

Oh, I didn't mention that in July 1979, Julie gave birth to our fourth child, who was-

Q: In Somalia?

PETTERSON: Well, no. She wanted to have the baby in Mogadishu, but her doctor there said, "Don't do it, because if you have any problems, there are no facilities here." Which was true. The hospital was in deplorable shape. So she went to Nairobi and had our fourth child, Brian, there.

Q: Wow!

PETTERSON: And then they came back, and Brian began his life in Somalia. He was the apple of everybody's eye, this little boy.

Q: He was a little younger than your three others, also.

PETTERSON: He was 14 years younger than the youngest of my others, 14 years younger than John.

Julie was teaching in the American school, teaching kindergarten. She would take Brian in a basket or in a carry-cot to school and do her teaching, which she loved.

By the end of 1982 it was time to move on.

Q: Let me interrupt you to ask you one quick question just before we go on.

PETTERSON: Yes.

Q: My impression is that the Somalis are a charming people, very attractive, very good looking, and probably lots of fun to get to know. But, you know, 10 years after you left, the United States is going in there because there's a really chaotic situation. Why is it that these people are so bad at governing themselves?

PETTERSON: Let me explain why Somalia fell apart. First of all, there is a tribal problem in Somalia. They don't call the tribes "tribes." They call them "clans," but it's the same thing. Somalis have a common ancestry, speak the same language, and have the same culture. But they were divided into clans, just as the Scots were centuries ago, and fought each other for water rights, for example. When Siad came to power, he played the clans off against each other to keep them divided and help maintain himself in power. By exacerbating clan rivalries, raising discontent by his autocratic ways, mishandling the economy, giving no outlet for political expression, and holding on to power long after he should have left, Siad laid the foundation for the chaos that came later. When he was finally ousted, there ensued a battle for supremacy

among these various groups, all well armed and headed by men whose major aim was to seize power. All this in a country where drought could strike at any time and cause more disaster for the people. The fighting went on and on, as none of the warlords was able to gain absolute ascendancy.

Q: Okay.

PETTERSON: When the drought of the early 1990s came, international aid poured in, but the fighting continue to rage. Eventually, as you know, the United States intervened militarily, initially to help keep people alive, to stop the appalling starvation.

I had been told that I had done a good job in Somalia, and when we left there, I was hoping to get another ambassadorship. But when I got back to Washington, I found that I really no such prospect. With the change of administration and consequent changes in the higher levels of the State Department, I was an unknown quantity. To become an ambassador you need the blessing of the people who comprise the "D Committee," which is the deputy secretary's committee that selects candidates for ambassadorships. If you've been overseas, as I had been, or for any other reason are not personally known to any of the people who are on the D Committee, and if you don't have the strong backing of your home bureau, your prospects are not good. And I also found that the leading lights in Personnel at that time couldn't have cared less about making me an ambassador again. They had many other people, as well as their own careers, to worry about. No one had even gone to the trouble to work on an alternative assignment for me. I was in limbo.

LARRY C. WILLIAMSON
Acting Director, Bureau of East African Affairs
Washington, DC (1980-1982)

Mr. Williamson was born and raised in Arkansas. After graduating from the University of California and serving a tour of duty with the US Marine Corps, he entered the Foreign Service in 1958. His foreign assignments took him to a number of African posts, including Sierra Leone, Northern Rhodesia, Tanzania, Kenya and Gabon, where he served as Ambassador, and in England. He had a number of assignments in Washington, several dealing with African Affairs. He also served in the Department's Executive Secretariat and as Assistant to the Counselor

Q: Let's pick up the various areas. Let's take Somalia. During the '80-"82 period, what were you up to?

WILLIAMSON: Up to that stage of the game we were very busily engaged in trying to keep the embassy open in Addis which was not easy.

Q: The DIRG was in.

WILLIAMSON: The DIRG was in and was becoming more and more anti-U.S. The Soviets were really nesting in there. The short lived and ill fated Somali drive for Ethiopia had burned itself out in the late '80s. "Maintenance" is not a word in either language. Both Ethiopians and the Somalis drove as far as they could get their tanks, and that's where it stopped. Then we had the civil war breaking out in Ethiopia.

Q: This was the Eritrea.

WILLIAMSON: The Eritrea and the Ethiopians. The DIRG was taking a creaming at that stage of the game. The Somalis decided that this would be a great time to take the Ogaden back again. There was a great hullabaloo in the Socialist bloc.. Fidel Castro came out and with the Soviets tried to talk Siad Barre out of an invasion. Castro argued that these were Socialist comrades. You can't go to war with them. Barre answered in effect, "The hell I can't. What's this Socialist brotherhood stuff? These are Ethiopians, and that's my land!" The Russians apparently told Barre, the president of Somalia, that if he went ahead with his plans to invade the Ogaden they would drop him as a client. By that time Ethiopia looked like it was falling to pieces internally.

Q: Was Kagnew station closed?

WILLIAMSON: Kagnew station was still intact. That was the other thing Fidel Castro raised with Barre. His brother came out and talked to him about Socialist brotherhood and uniting against the Imperialists.

Q: Raul?

WILLIAMSON: Raul. The idea was to form a great, huge Socialist power in the area: Yemen, Somalia and Ethiopia would all be Socialists together and protected by the Soviet Union. All that was fine but Somalia didn't want to be protected by the Soviet Union. They wanted and indeed Siad needed to reintegrate the Ogaden into Somalia. The Somalis took off and damn near occupied the entire Ogaden, but the Ethiopians with the aid of Cuban troops beat them back. The Somalis were left high and dry, the Soviets did drop them. Bam! Left everything. They lost the war, and the Ogaden: clans in Somaliland were pretty irritated about the whole thing anyway as well as the fact that what had been the old British territory up there in British Somaliland was in then a state of clan warfare. We showed up and said, "We'd like to talk to you about Berbera," and it was like manna from heaven as far as the Somalis were concerned. We had a huge effort to come to an agreement with Siad: Access to Berbera in exchange for a security package of some sort.

Dick Moose came in to do the negotiating. The first Somali demand was for, in effect, free access to the U.S. Treasury in perpetuity. We talked them out of that!. We were talking and talking and talking and talking, and we tried another agreement where we would come in and fix the airfield up and make it work. There was some land involved in it. We put a minimum amount of money into it. The Somalis began to talk about their brothers in the west, the benefits of the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) Alliance, etc. We accepted some Somali students in

our military colleges around here.

The fact of the matter was when we got to Berbera and everybody took a look at what we had there, it wasn't much. It was a hell of a long way to anyplace. Even your drinking water would have to be flown in. You couldn't put a permanent base in there. The harbor was very shallow, and extensive coral reefs would need a lot of dredging. You could probably get destroyers in there but not much more.

I think we actually used Berbera for three or four exercises staged through Egypt, all of them satisfactory but nothing brilliant. In no way could you put in ahead of time the stockpile that you would need to mount an effective operation in Iran. You can imagine, every Somali tribesman in 50 counties would be down there pilfering and sniping away. Besides, I kept telling everybody -- it didn't seem to make an impression, but it's true -- that the minute we started talking about using Berbera strategically, i.e., bringing the Soviets into the operation with a possible Soviet strike down there, you could watch that permission to use being yanked out from underneath you and the wells poisoned if necessary. It never came to that, but that was how I occupied myself. That was about nine months of work.

Q: The military at the Pentagon, were they as dubious as you were?

WILLIAMSON: I think at heart they were, but it was a whole different atmosphere. Dick Moose didn't like the deal at all, and I thought it was stupid and told everybody including the military. The military however received orders to do it. Brzezinski said, "Get that airfield," so that was all there was to it. There were no ifs, ands, or buts about it. I started talking about the price and so did Dick, and we actually got a price reduction. The overthrow of the DIRG brought the whole issue to a halt and we never consummated the deal. The next year Siad was overthrown and Berbera was forgotten.

Q: What about in Ethiopia. We had Kagnew Station. In a way technology was beginning to move away from...

WILLIAMSON: You know how the military is. Something like that's always vital to the security of the U.S. – faced with a fait accompli they discover that they can live without it after all.

FRANK PAVICH
Program Officer, USAID
Mogadishu (1981-1986)

Frank Pavich was born in 1933 in California. He graduated from the University of Southern California 1955 and then served in the US Marine Corps. Pavich served in the Peace Corps before joining USAID in 1966, with whom he served in Vietnam, Ethiopia, the Yemen Arab Republic, Somalia, Ghana, Pakistan, and Egypt. Pavich was interviewed by W. Haven North in 1998.

PAVICH: I finished up in Yemen in 1980 or 1981. I took an assignment in Somalia. I remember my colleague, Diane Ponasik said, "Why do you want to go there? It is such a problem." I thought to myself that that was where I want to be, where there are problems.

Q: Why did she think Somalia was a problem?

PAVICH: Because there were starving refugees there. This is after the war between Ethiopia and Somalia when all the Somalis were chased out of Ethiopia and clustered in district capitals all over the country and starving to death. I like that kind of action because there is something going on there that you can do something about and feel like you have done something at the end of the tour. That has always attracted me. If you look back on my history so far, I went to Vietnam, etc. and there has always been that element in it for me. So, we went to Somalia.

The USAID Director at the time was Jim Kelly. My title there was Rural Development and Refugee Assistance, something like that. There were somewhere between a million and two million refugees out there in 15 or 17 camps. My job was to go and visit the camps and talk to the officials to find out how many refugees were there and make sure the food was being delivered and distribution was being managed properly and that our contractors and grantees were doing the job. We had a contract with CARE to do distribution of food and we were doing some development things.

We were in the process of developing two projects for development with these refugee people. One of the projects was basically in forestry and the other one was in rural development. I worked on the design of both of those projects. We had people coming in from our regional office in Nairobi and other places to help us do the studies for the design work. Here was a situation where I wasn't doing it singlehandedly, but with a lot of good help. Basically the first year was designing the projects. We got them approved and began the programs. The work was managing the projects and the camps.

Then I was invited to leave AID and go to work for the State Department in the embassy as the Refugee Coordinator Officer (RefCord). I was first secretary for refugee affairs, or something. That struck me as being very interesting because I had been around embassies a lot but never worked inside. This was an excellent opportunity to do so.

Q: Why would the State Department need someone when they had the AID mission and you there?

PAVICH: Because State (Department) had a $60 to $80 million program for refugee relief. All the money that was going into refugees was coming through the State Department.

Q: It wasn't run by AID?

PAVICH: No.

Q: This was refugee money, I suppose.

PAVICH: Yes. They needed somebody with AID experience to work on it. So, I was the refugee coordinator. I left AID and went into the embassy. I still had some contacts with AID but was under the direction of and being rated by the DCM.

Q: What was the function of the refugee coordinator?

PAVICH: Well, we had a major program with the UNHCR [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees], with the World Food Program and other UN agencies, and a whole string of private volunteer organizations. So, it mainly was coordinating.

Q: The U.S. was to be the coordinator of all this and not the UN?

PAVICH: Well, the U.S. wanted to coordinate its part.

Q: Was there some overall coordinator?

PAVICH: The overall coordinator was the head of the UNHCR, but the United States didn't always agree with UNHCR on a lot of issues. I was the liaison with the UNHCR person and other UN agencies.

Q: What were some of the issues?

PAVICH: How many refugees there are? How much food they are getting? Where is the money going? Are the health programs being managed effectively? Are other kinds of programs, including education, effective? Are the refugees being taken care of properly? The big one was how many refugees are there?

Q: I gather that was a political issue with the government?

PAVICH: Yes, very political.

Q: Why was that?

PAVICH: Each refugee was issued a ration card that entitled the refugee to a certain amount of grain, sugar, blankets, etc. So, anybody in Somalia who had a ration card was rich. If you had two ration cards you were doing pretty well. If you had 10, 15, 20 or 100 ration cards, as some people did or had control of, you had a lot.

Q: Through their family or clan or individually?

PAVICH: Every way you can imagine. Through family, clan, individuals, the administration. People who were loyal party members in the government, working in a refugee organization, got ration cards or had control of ration cards.

Q: Who gave out the ration cards?

PAVICH: The government. Well, the UNHCR gave them out to the refugees. So, then you had the question of who was a refugee. In a line of 20,000 people, how many of them were refugees? Twenty, 18, 5? That was the question. No one could really tell.

Q: How did you settle this question?

PAVICH: It was never really settled. I had a young woman working for me, Michelle Savoy, and she and I would go the camps and walk through every compound and look in every hut and determine in our own minds based on our experience whether that hut was inhabited or not. You could tell if it was inhabited because there would be three stones where the people were making their fire, cooking utensils around, clothes hanging on sticks, dogs hanging around, etc. There would be others that were not inhabited. There may be the three stones, but no ashes. The more often you go through the more you learn about whether it is inhabited or not. You would just divide up the camp into sections and determine what percent of each section was inhabited.

Q: How many people do you count per hut?

PAVICH: Probably between six and eight. Mom and dad, three kids and grandma and grandpa.

Q: The people weren't there to count?

PAVICH: No. I did this for five years. At the end of a year, or so, we had a pretty good idea who was there and who wasn't there. We would be told those not around were out with the goats. Well, they weren't suppose to have goats. If they had goats they wouldn't be in the camp. There was a continual argument with the camp officials about how many refugees there were.

And then we would go to town, to the market and look around and find a rebagging facility where individuals were rebagging all of this food that was given out as rations. They would put it back into the same bags they had emptied, sew them up, put them in a truck and take them into Mogadishu to sell at the market. We would spot it, go back and tell the district officials who were astonished that this was happening. Of course, they knew it was happening, but would go and close it down immediately. Three weeks later we would come back and find another one and we would go through the same exercise.

Remember that movie Casablanca where they had the illegal gambling in the back room, where the police officer would go in and close it down and then pick up his winnings? Well, it was sort of like that. It was a constant thing.

One day we were counting refugees. The counters would dip the finger of the refugee in a pot of ink when we counted them. Later on, they would take some of the chlorine that they used to purify the water and wipe the ink off their finger and come back through the line. Of course, they could never get all the ink off and we would catch them and report them to the camp officials

who would pretend to beat them and send them off. Then you would find them coming back again.

Q: How many people were in these camps?

PAVICH: Thousands. Twenty or forty thousand in each camp.

Q: And you counted them all?

PAVICH: Yes, we did. There were allegedly two million refugees and we were saying there were not more than a million and probably it was more like 700 thousand. We would go back and forth on how much food to bring in so we would have control. But, they had control too because you would find starving people and they would say it was our fault, we hadn't brought in enough food. It was a constant tug of war.

Q: What was the definition of a refugee?

PAVICH: Someone who had come across the border from Ethiopia and was a resident of Ethiopia, who had left the place where they lived. They were pastoralists and didn't live in one place. All their animals were dead and they were completely destitute.

Q: How could you tell the difference between them and the regular Somali?

PAVICH: You couldn't. Some of these people were starving to death, were dying.

Q: I suppose they weren't necessarily refugees. The Somalis must have been effected by the drought.

PAVICH: These people were war refugees, they were chased across the border. Some of the clan was on both sides of the border. You would have say 50 percent of a family in Somalia and 50 percent in Ethiopia and both would be in camp. So, how to you figure out who is and isn't a refugee? That was the question.

Q: What were some of your other major problems besides the numbers.

PAVICH: Relief people were getting beat up. The major programs were health, rehabilitating people, giving them food.

Q: How did you rehabilitate them? I suppose the main objective was to get them back across the border?

PAVICH: Feed them so they could regain their strength. Getting them to the point where they could get some more animals and go back out on the range.

Q: Would they go back out?

PAVICH: Well, they wouldn't go back to Ethiopia because they would get shot at. They were at war. That was the problem and I'm sure it still is. There is really no law and order because people did what they wanted to do and if you pushed too hard you were likely to get beat up or something. You weren't in a town but out in the bush where there was nothing except refugee camps. The only law out there was the army if they were around and the camp officials. It was kind of tough.

In terms of development, we tried to get some to grow some crops along the river, but that was pretty meager.

Q: What about health and education programs?

PAVICH: All of that was done through voluntary agencies.

Q: What kind of programs were you carrying out in the health area?

PAVICH: Mother and child health, nutrition, special feeding programs for malnourished kids and primary education for kids.

Q: They were receptive to having those programs?

PAVICH: Oh yes, sure. Being in a refugee camp was considered probably the best place to be because you had the best medical assistance in the country. You had doctors and nurses there who were fully equipped with medicine. If you were going to get sick, you wanted to do so out in the bush, not in town, because all the doctors were out in the bush.

Q: Let's go back to the projects. What were the two projects?

PAVICH: It was trying to get those refugees who could, who had some experience in agriculture and who wanted to settle on the land. Trouble was, most of these pastoral people didn't want to have anything to do with being settled. They wanted to be taken care of until they could go back to the range lands But, there were those who were willing to go into agriculture so we could provide them with work with the Somali agriculture extension person in that region to get them started with seed, etc. Or, get them into doing some reforestation activities. Or give them some chickens and into poultry production. Or give them some goats and try getting them back on the range to the limited extent that they could. To keep them busy mainly, and to the extent possible, productive.

Q: This was all for the refugees not the regular Somalis?

PAVICH: There weren't any regular Somalis out there. The mission had agricultural programs but they were big ag programs on the big rivers, Juba and Shebeli. It was sort of a stock aid agricultural program and we, on the refugee side, didn't get much involved in that because we were away from those areas. It was just refugees and trying to figure out how many there were

and getting the government to take care of them.

Q: You mentioned reforestation by refugees.

PAVICH: To some extent we were trying to get them to plant trees. It was kind of meager because there wasn't much they could do. They couldn't go far from where they were and had to do whatever they could do around the camp area. The camps were just bad. They were needed mainly to make the logistics of caring for the refugees easier to manage, but the camps were a bad situation because they created a dependency. Without the camps people couldn't do anything, or didn't feel disposed to do anything so long so they were being cared for by the government and the donor countries.

We had a rehabilitation program where we got road crews filling up pot holes. The roads were just tracks. It was pretty basic stuff. I did that for five years.

Q: Any special events during that time, any revolution or, was it pretty much the same from beginning to end?

PAVICH: There was a crisis every week. Somebody was starving, a ship wasn't getting unloaded, food got stolen, the refugees were rebellious, an outbreak of cholera, etc. There was never a dull moment.

Q: Was there any sense of progress in terms of beginning to minimize the population by people moving away?

PAVICH: They couldn't move away. The only possibility was to get them being productive where they were.

Q: Was this before the drought problem or was this at the same time?

PAVICH: Same time.

Q: One had the sense that for a while there was a very serious problem but after a while when food was getting to them you didn't have such a serious problem?

PAVICH: Well, there was always the problem of how many refugees there are. Everybody wanted to be a refugee, to get into a camp and get a ration card. So, there was this constant tension of keeping the numbers at a controllable level.

Q: But, there wasn't any real change over the five years in terms of numbers or conditions of people?

PAVICH: The health of the people improved. We saved lots of lives, something that doesn't seem to get recognized. People focus on the corruption and all, but a lot of people were dying. So, lots of lives were saved and brought back to health. This doesn't happen overnight. Between

these times there were outbreaks of different diseases.

Q: But there weren't permanent solutions?

PAVICH: Well, peace would be one such solution as well as finding something productive for these people to do off the range lands because the range lands were getting smaller and the population was getting bigger. It is a dilemma. They have the exact same problems today (1988) in the Horn of Africa as were there ten years ago, nothing has changed. And, it won't change. It is going to be a maintenance problem for the rest of the world.

Q: Are the refugee camps pretty much still there as they were when you were there?

PAVICH: I don't know. I haven't been back. After all the different wars they have had there it is hard to know.

Q: Were you having clan fights while you were there?

PAVICH: No, the president, Siyad Barre, pretty much had the population under control. But a lot of these camps were used as bases for military operations. There was a very strong group of armed people who were under the control of the government who sort of kept things under control in the camps. The refugees did pretty much what they were told to do by the government, including getting ration cards when they weren't refugees.

Q: You were talking about the UN agencies, etc. How did you formally function as a coordinating effort?

PAVICH: So much of what I had done in Somalia was outside the normal AID context. I felt my main contribution was in facilitating with and between the United States and the government of Somalia and UN agencies (about 25 agencies that were working in the area). The way that I did that was to be at and contribute at the meetings. As I learned from Ambassador Oakley (ambassador at the time) to "say it as I saw it" and not pull any punches. I let them know I knew what was going on. I tried to get the good things done and do things about was not being done properly. As I said earlier, every week there was a new crisis. It wasn't a tranquil situation, it was a five year crisis, at least for me, as well as everybody else there including both sides of the government and among the UN and private agencies. So, communications between all of these diverse groups and having the interests of each group represented fairly at a meeting was important. Quite often the U.S. would be heavy handed on some food issue whereas the government was not always wrong or corrupt, so the good had to be brought forward. It was the same between other agencies as well. Communications was a constant job, finding out what was really going on and what were really the issues. Developing a rapport with these people was important. They relied on you as being fair, not being just the American mouth piece. Somebody who would represent the situation as you saw it. That was important.

Q: Did you meet formally regularly?

PAVICH: Yes.

Q: How did that work?

PAVICH: Monthly meetings with all of the voluntary agencies, the government and the donors.

Q: The government came to these meetings?

PAVICH: Yes. This is the forum where we discuss what was going on within the voluntary community, and in camps.

Q: Who chaired that general meeting?

PAVICH: There was a former State Department person who was working for the UNHCR. He was an old Asian hand and in Vietnam at the same time I was. He was a good chair. Everybody liked him because he ran a one hour meeting and would never allowed it to go beyond an hour. He kept it moving along.

Q: How many people would be involved in these meetings?

PAVICH: Easily 100-150 people. It was a big program. There were 40 different voluntary agencies in addition to all the UN agencies and the donors and the government. There were lots of people there. They all had a stake in the program for one reason or another.

There was also a food aid meeting.

Q: Who chaired that meeting?

PAVICH: The World Food Program.

Q: That was a smaller group I guess?

PAVICH: It was a smaller group but a very important group because that is where the level of food was negotiated.

Q: They negotiated numbers?

PAVICH: Yes.

Q: The government was involved in that too?

PAVICH: Everybody was there. And then there were meetings between the American embassy and UNHCR, the American embassy and the Relief Commission, etc. Most of the time the ambassador was representing the U.S. and that was about as high level as you could get. We had a good ambassador there who was a very strong and determined man.

Q: Ambassador Oakley.

PAVICH: Yes. Then we had Ambassador Bridges, too. He had the same strengths but a different personality. So, there was a lot of very hard negotiating meetings that went on on all sorts of issues. Stealing of food, stealing of trucks, how many refugees there were, etc.

Q: Did you have big transport problems?

PAVICH: Oh, yes. CARE was running the whole operation. They had hundreds of big trucks. Sometimes they would lose a truck which would be full of food and driven out into the bush and just disappear. You would have to chase that down.

Q: I understand they had an Indian group that did that work. Is that right?

PAVICH: The Indians did a remarkable job. Nobody could have done what they did. They stood out in the blistering sun every day in those refugee camps and managed the food distribution for years, and no one can do that.

Q: They were the CARE people?

PAVICH: Right. It was the most difficult job that I have ever seen because there was nothing good about it. There was lots of hostility towards them because they were the monitors. The weather was hot, hot, hot and there wasn't any shade. It was just dusty and dirty. They did a wonderful job. We were lucky we had them.

Q: Did any of the other agencies stand out in your mind?

PAVICH: They all stood out. From my perspective they all did a heroic job. They lived in the camps in tents or lean-tos. The same kind of housing the refugees had. They cooked out every night under the stars. There was nothing comfortable about it except when somebody like me would drive in with a container full of cold beer. That was the main luxury.

JAMES K. BISHOP
Deputy Assistant Secretary, African Affairs
Washington, DC (1981-1987)

Ambassador James K. Bishop, Jr. was born in New York in 1938. He received his bachelor's degree from Holy Cross College in 1960. His career has included positions in Auckland, Beirut, Yaounde, and ambassadorships to Nigeria, Liberia, and Somalia. Ambassador Bishop was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in November 1995.

BISHOP: We also put a premium on our relationships with Somalia, where the Carter

administration had negotiated access to the airfield and port at Berbera--from which we expected to deploy combat aircraft and vessels in the event of a conflict on the Arabian peninsula. We also had negotiated access to Mogadishu for anti-submarine patrol aircraft. Mogadishu was also to be a transit point for military equipment and personnel on the way to south-west Asia.

We had a similar arrangement with Somalia to deploy P-3s to Mogadishu and to Berbera. We also pre-positioned petroleum supplies in both places to be used by US aircraft--or vessels that might use Berbera. We increased the size of the Mogadishu airport so that it could accommodate a larger number of US aircraft should we want to use them for operations to the northeast.

In Somalia, we had to walk a rather fine line. The Siad Barre government was an irredentist government. It claimed not only Somalia, but also Somali inhabited parts of Ethiopia, as well as Djibouti, where the French maintained a de-facto protectorate. It also lay claim to Somali-inhabited parts of Kenya. Barre had gone to war against Ethiopia in a disastrous campaign in the Ogaden in 1976-77. He was defeated when the Soviets, who had been Somalia's principal supporters, switched sides and provided the Ethiopians with military equipment and advisors. The Ethiopians also employed some Cuban soldiers--an expeditionary force--which helped turn the tide of battle against the Somalis, driving them back across the border with considerable loss of military equipment and personnel.

As we engaged with the Somalis, we wanted the support of their military which was the predominant political force in the country. But we certainly did not want to do anything which would encourage Barre and his military to consider another invasion of Ethiopia. That would have not only violated international law, but would have brought further punishment to the Somalis. There were still periodic raids on the border, from both sides, with proxy forces being used by each regime. We had to generate an assistance package which would not encourage another invasion of the Ogaden. But it had to be large enough to persuade the Somali military to grant us access to the Somali military facilities which the Carter and Reagan administrations wanted to use. Our package focused largely on non-lethal equipment--e.g. radars and communication equipment. The radars did very little for the Somalis who did not have a capable air defense units that could have responded to threats detected by the radars. In 1982, in response to a substantial Ethiopian incursion, we did rush some APCs and rifles to Somalia. That was intended as a signal to the Ethiopians and their Soviet friends that the Reagan administration would not countenance cross-border invasions. But, as I said, the great bulk of our military assistance consisted of non-lethal equipment.

In the mid-80s, Ambassador Bob Oakley became persuaded that we had to provide more lethal equipment and, over my objections, was able to persuade Crocker and others in Washington to provide lethal equipment to the Somali military, primarily to further insure our access to the Somali military facilities. Thus we provided some long range artillery pieces, which Oakley forecast would primarily be used during the Armed Forces Day parade. In early 1991, that artillery was used to fire on parts of Mogadishu where dissidents were organizing their attack on the government. A Somali woman who worked in our home cried beside me as we watched plumes of smoke rise from the neighborhood where her four children were living as heavy artillery shells crashed into Somali homes.

Another factor in our relations with Somalia was the refugee community which resulted from the Ogaden war, when Somalis living in Ethiopia crossed the border seeking protection. This refugee program was subject to flagrant abuse by the Somalis. They exaggerated the number of refugees who had entered Somalia and then they diverted substantial amounts of refugee assistance to other purposes. A not very attentive UN establishment permitted these abuses to continue. We took the lead in trying to reduce, if not eliminate, these diversions. The consequent tensions became a major irritant in our relationship with Somalia.

By the mid-1980s, the level of domestic opposition to Siad Barre had grown considerably. Ironically, this was due in part to a rapprochement that was worked out between Somalia and Ethiopia with our encouragement. This agreement resulted in the Ethiopians shipping back to Somalia a number of Barre opponents who took up arms against him in the northern part of the country. Siad Barre's reaction to this rebellion was sanguinary. He used artillery and air power against several northern cities, killing tens of thousands of innocent civilians. When we found out about this use of fire-power, we halted new lethal military equipment supply arrangements. That obviously added to the strain in our relations with Somalia. It also did not help the Department's relationship with the Pentagon, which continued to place very high importance on its access to Somali military facilities. DoD wanted State to be more responsive to Somali requests for lethal equipment; we were not prepared to be more forthcoming in light of our concerns about Somali human rights violations.

From the start of the ‘80s, our approach to the region was to work with Somalia, Sudan and Kenya. The military assistance programs in all three nations were undertaken simultaneously as we gained the desired access to facilities in those countries which would enable us to deploy our forces more readily for emergency situations in the broader area. Tensions between Somalia and Kenya were a complicating factor, as the Kenyans feared this was an additional reason not to provide offensive equipment to the Somalis.

I should note that there was an evolution in the area. Barre was always recognized as a difficult character. Nimeiri was seen as a friend in the early 1980s for his support of Sadat in the Camp David process, for his willingness to stand up to Qadhafi, and for his cooperation with us in our south-west Asian strategy. It was only when Nimeiri went on his religious binge--relying more on the advice of Sufi mystics than on more conventional counselors--that we became concerned about Sudan's orientation and policies. Nimeiri had been involved with us and the Israelis in the rescue and transfer of Ethiopian Jews to Israel. They moved from Ethiopia through the Sudan to Israel in a series of covert arrangements that only became public when published by the Israeli press, much to Nimeiri's embarrassment. In the last phase of the process, our Air Force planes landed in eastern Sudan to pick up and transport the refugees--all done covertly. Nimeiri’s cooperations in these arrangements was one of the vulnerabilities which led to his overthrow.

Bob Oakley in Somalia was very effective; I did disagree with him on the extent of our military assistance to Somalia. But I admired his skill in dealing with them; when I arrived in Mogadishu several years later, I found that he was the most respected of my predecessors.

CHESTER ARTHUR CROCKER
Assistant Secretary for African Affairs
Washington, DC (1981-1989)

Assistant Secretary Crocker was born and raised in New York and educated at Ohio State University and the School for Strategic and International Studies (SAIS). He served on the National Security Council (1970-1972), as Professor at Georgetown University (1972-1977), and as Director for African Affairs at the Center for Strategic and International Affairs (1976-1980). In 1981 he was appointed Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs and served in that capacity until 1989, at which time he rejoined the faculty of Georgetown University. Mr. Crocker was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2006.

Q: Was there anything, while you were there, that you could do about the Horn of Africa?

CROCKER: That's the important question and you put your finger on it. I should mention that we also had another troubled friend in Siad Barre in Somalia, who had come out on top of the wars for control of his country back in the late Seventies, but he also made a mess of things by overdoing it and attacking Ethiopia and then getting his clock cleaned by Soviet-, Cuban-backed Ethiopia.

So there was a standoff there and Siad Barre would always look at us and say, "What are you doing for me today, compared to all that they're doing for those awful people next door?" So it was that kind of Cold War-linked polarization.

Q: When you left, what was sort of on the right course, it may take work, but on the right course and where were there going to be continuing troubles?

CROCKER: Well, the Horn, as we were just talking, is an area of real concern and I know my colleagues who served out in Somalia were also very worried because they could see that Siad Barre was not good for the Somali people or for the region.

He was very troubled and his regime was getting more and more narrowly based and relying more and more on his Marehan clan, at the expense of other clans of Somalis.

And we had fairly active embassies that were trying to keep this from going off the track, but it was a holding action and we were worried about it. I don't want to read back retrospectively and rewrite history here, but I think by the time you got to '89, '90 it was pretty far gone in Somalia.

We had difficulty with that relationship and Siad Barre, as he would quickly confess, was not a paragon of human rights leadership. He joked about it. I'd go see him and he said, "I know you're coming to talk about human rights issues and about opening up my political system and doing the things that you Americans would like to see us do.

“Let me tell you. I live in a rough neighborhood. I’ve got these awful Ethiopians next door.” And then he would stop and he would say, “Somalis are not Americans. You need a strong hand out here. And, by the way, I’m no Abe Lincoln,” he said to me once. So we knew we didn’t have an Abe Lincoln on our hands. It was a very worrisome place.

ROBERT B. OAKLEY
Ambassador
Somalia (1982-1984)

Ambassador Robert B. Oakley was born in 1931 in Texas. He graduated from Princeton University in 1952 and served in the US Navy until 1955. Oakley joined the Foreign Service in 1957 and served overseas in Sudan, the Ivory Coast, Vietnam, France, Lebanon, and as Ambassador to Zaire, Somalia and Pakistan. In Washington DC, Oakley served in the Office of UN Political Affairs, the Bureau of East Asian Affairs, as the Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism and for the National Security Council. Oakley was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kenney and Thomas Stern in 1992.

Q: *But in 1982, you were assigned to Somalia.*

OAKLEY: That is right. That job came suddenly shortly after I returned from Zaire and Chet Crocker and Frank Wisner thought that that would be a good assignment for me. They must have thought that my experiences in Zaire would be good reparation for Mogadishu. And that is where I went.

The White House went along with that - it would not have sent me to a good European post, but Somalia must have seemed acceptable to them. They probably considered that I had been in some very tough spots before and therefore should be able to do a good job in Somalia. As a matter of fact, I think it probably worked well; it was like moving from the major leagues - Mobutu - to a AAA minor league club - Siad Barre - or from Zaire to Somalia.

In fact, there were some similarities. Both countries were run by dictators - former Army men - who really didn't give a damn about their people and were solely interested in their personal aggrandizement - power and money. They both used the Cold War to obtain U.S. support. Somalia, like Zaire, was viewed by the U.S. through the prism of the Cold War.

I knew almost nothing about Somalia when I went there. No one in Washington knew much about that country. Somehow both we and the Soviets had conned ourselves into believing that the Horn of Africa was of great strategic importance. I think that after a few years, both countries recognized the folly of their conventional wisdom. But in 1982, we still viewed that part of the world as being strategically vital to U.S. national security interests. We had established several large military bases to protect the Indian Ocean and the Middle East - Brzezinki's “Arc of Crisis”.

We built some; we tried to rehab some, like the old Soviet base in Berbera. In fact, we traded allies with the Soviets. They had been the predominant force in Somalia, providing large amounts of economic and military assistance. Their generals were advising the Somalis in their war with Ethiopia. We on the other hand were Ethiopia's major supporter. Then, almost overnight, the same Soviet generals were advising Ethiopia on how to defeat Somalia's offensive deep into the Ogaden, and Soviet planes were flying in Cuban troops and heavy weapons to help Ethiopia. The Somali offensive was totally destroyed. The Soviets were kicked out of Somalia, but became dominant in Ethiopia. The U.S. started assisting Somalia.

Personally, I had no reason at the time to challenge the conventional wisdom about the strategic importance of the Horn of Africa. I wasn't a fiery supporter of the thesis, but I didn't oppose it either. By 1982, Reg Bartholomew had secured base rights for us at Berbera, which the Soviets had occupied. During my tour, that base was renovated - both the port and the airbase. We held some maneuvers there - amphibious landings. It soon became evident that CENTCOM [The Pentagon's Central Command] would not be using the base very much because improved airlift capability made it unnecessary. The U.S. Air Force could fly directly from Egypt into the Gulf without needing to land in Berbera. But at the time we secured the base rights, we didn't know that we would have so extended the reach of our aircraft. By the time I got to Somalia, it was pretty clear that neither the airfield nor the port would be used very much.

Despite the concern of some American military officers, I didn't see much evidence of Soviet efforts to interdict shipping in the Gulf of Aden or the Red Sea. Nevertheless, Somalia became part of the Cold War strategy - the same syndrome that applied to Zaire. In retrospect, by 1986, it was obvious to me that both we and the Soviets had been mistaken about the strategic importance of the Horn of Africa. In 1987, we held a meeting with the Soviets to discuss regional issues in Geneva. Dick Murphy, then Assistant Secretary for NEA, Chet Crocker, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, and I were there. We talked to the Soviet Middle East and Africa experts about the Horn and we all agreed at our level that from that point on, both the U.S. and the USSR should not regard the Horn of Africa as an area of strategic importance, and that both the U.S. and the Soviet Union had spent a lot of time and effort in that part of the world with very few, if any, benefits. It took a while for this to sink in at the policy level, if it ever did.

We did manage in the 1982-84 period to avoid paying a political price for the use of the bases. Siad Barre kept trying to involve us more deeply in Somali affairs - i.e. support for his regime - , but we resisted his offers to use Berbera as the advance headquarters for CENTCOM. We were not about to give him greater support, which would have been the clearly implicit quid pro quo for use of Berbera as CENTCOM headquarters. I will tell you later about my struggles with Siad Barre on economic issues - somewhat comparable to my debates with Mobutu. We did provide some modest military assistance, primarily to give Somalia some defense against the raids that were being mounted from the Ogaden in Ethiopia. Those raids were a threat and conducted by Somali rebels and Ethiopian military, with Soviet support. We used that assistance also in an effort to move the Somali Army in the right political direction - e.g. economic reforms and human rights. Hersi Morgan, Siad Barre's son-in-law - later known as the "butcher of Hargeysa" - was someone I worked with. But we did not pay a political price to Siad Barre for the bases. That became quite clear when I returned to Somalia in 1992; the Somalis did not hold the U.S.

responsible for the Barre regime, and was aware of my sharp disputes with Siad Barre about misbehavior of some of his guards.

By the time I arrived in Somalia, our relationship with Ethiopia had soured because of President Mengistu's deplorable human rights record. That opened the way for the Soviets to shift their support from small Somalia to a larger and more strategically located Ethiopia. So they changed sides and then we did by becoming Somalia's patron. I remember talking to some Somali generals who told me that during the war in Ogaden they could monitor Ethiopian broadcasts and hear the voices of the same Soviet advisors who only a few weeks earlier had been advising them, the Somalis.

By 1982, our military and economic assistance programs in Somalia were growing. The Embassy staff was still small - about one-third of that in Zaire. By the time I left, the Embassy probably doubled in size. The growth - almost all of it for assistance programs - was not a management problem. It worked reasonably well. If we had any major problems it was with American personnel hired on contract; they were independent of our direct control. Some were under the general supervision of the Embassy's Defense Representative's Office, which grew considerably during my tour, others were working for AID. So both the staffs working on military and economic assistance grew. From a management point of view, what I did find when I arrived in Mogadishu was a large cleavage among the various elements of the Embassy. The economic assistance and military assistance teams hardly ever talked to each other. By the time I finished my tour, I was pleased by the close working relationships that our economic assistance, our military assistance and the State Department components of the Embassy had established. One of my management objectives as a chief of mission has always been to ensure that the various U.S. programs and elements are mutually reinforcing. If we use all of our tools toward common goals, we get much more leverage, particularly from people like Mobutu and Siad Barre. We also avoid having one agency played off against another.

The quality of the staff improved during my tour. The Department found me a good political officer - Lynn Scensey and John Hirsch were excellent DCMs. Unlike Zaire, which was an attractive assignment for African experts, Somalia was not.

As I suggested, Somalia increasingly was viewed at that time as a “front line” state in the Cold War. Our military insisted that because many of our military aircraft could not fly without refueling into the Gulf and the Indian Ocean, it needed a base in Somalia. The same view was held by the Navy; it had to have a port. Somehow, Somalia became critical to our support first of the Shah and then after he was overthrown, our support for the Gulf and Afghanistan. The case was made that unless we could provide adequate military force, the Gulf oil supplies were in jeopardy. I accepted these premises when I went to Somalia, although I was not totally convinced by the arguments made by our military.

I had not forgotten that Mobutu at one stage had offered us a base at Kamina - a large air base originally built by the Belgians which was later used frequently to support Savimbi and UNITA in Angola. When I asked him why he thought that might be of interest to us, he said that it would be important for NATO operations. I told him that I didn't think that NATO really needed a base

in the middle of Zaire. It was clear to me that Mobutu's offer had nothing to do with NATO; it was just a further effort on his part to squeeze additional support out of us. When he noticed my skepticism, he said that perhaps the base could be used as a staging area for operations in the Indian Ocean. That didn't make much sense to me either; why would we want to stop in the middle of Zaire on the way to Somalia or Kenya or Djibouti when we could ship the material directly by sea? At that stage, he became quite angry and told me that I obviously knew nothing about military strategy.

The same syndrome reappeared in Somalia. Siad Barre wanted us to open an advance headquarters of CENTCOM, which had just been created shortly before I went to Somalia. I kept saying that it was not needed. Siad Barre's motives were the same as Mobutu's: to tie the U.S. to him. Siad Barre insisted that he could provide all the headquarter's needs; I told him that we didn't need to move it out of Florida. In addition to the unnecessary expense that would be involved, I was not that comfortable with our total strategy and I thought it was not at all desirable for us to put more of our eggs in Siad Barre's basket. Siad Barre's sole interest in us was as a way of keeping himself in power and fending off his domestic enemies as well as the Ethiopians. They were a constant problem in the Ogaden - the Ethiopia-Somalia border area. Not only were the Ethiopians - with Soviet support - a threat to Somalia from that region, but a number of anti-Siad Barre Somali factions operated from the Ogaden. Those factions, supported by the Ethiopians, were constantly trying to infiltrate Somalia in an effort to overthrow Siad Barre. He had not forgotten that the Ethiopians, assisted by Cubans, had beaten the Somalis badly a few years earlier. At that time Brzezinski had wanted us to intervene, but Carter refused to do so. I think some of Siad Barre's fears were overblown; I did not believe that there would be any major Ethiopian invasion. But there were occasional Ethiopian Army small scale raids, although the soldiers were disguised as guerrillas. The Somali military was not particularly effective; its command structure was lacking. Morgan, who had attended the Command and General Staff College at Ft. Leavenworth, was much more adept at pulling disparate elements of the Somali military together on the Ethiopian borders than any of the officers trained by the Soviets. Later on, his small war-lord force was much better disciplined and trained than the others.

On one occasion, CENTCOM had a team in northern Somalia looking for areas for amphibious landings - under operation “Bright Star (an annual U.S.-Egypt joint military exercise).” The team had landed on the Berbera airstrip in a C-130. The field was overflown by two planes, which the team reported were Soviet MiGs. All the U.S. military scrambled. It turned out that the planes were actually U.S. F-14s from an aircraft carrier, flying photo recon over the beaches. Of course, we had never been informed that this would happen. The Somalis tried to fire their SAM missiles, but they never launched. They blew up on their launching pads. But our people on the ground were sure that the two planes were Soviet fighters which had taken off from some Ethiopian airfield. There was a lot of tension and misunderstanding in Somalia, fueled by the Cold War.

We did provide some limited military assistance to Somalia. The material was primarily APCs [armored personnel carriers] and TOW missiles (anti tank weapons). We also provided assistance to help the Somalis get their Soviet equipment operating again. But we never provided major systems - aircraft, artillery, etc. We did fly P-23s out of Berbera for Indian Ocean Gulf

surveillance purposes. I think what we provided was a good use of resources. It discouraged the Ethiopians - and their Cuban and Soviet supporters. It didn't bring a complete halt to the skirmishes on the Ethiopian-Somalia border, but I think it may have prevented the outbreak of any large-scale conflicts. The Somalis used our equipment well; it was not too sophisticated for that country's military forces. We did not provide any offensive capability, beyond some old Italian tanks which looked very good on the parade ground, but could never have made it to the front. In fact, we had to bring in a special team of Army mechanics to work on them enough to get them to and through the national day parade. Not everyone [in our government] agreed to giving tanks to the Somalis, but they were in such a state, that they hardly fitted the description of military hardware.

What we did provide satisfied our military requirements because we obtained rights to use of military facilities in Somalia - which was limited by the rigor of living in Somalia and a base for our long-range aircraft. We were not interested in establishing a large U.S. military presence. In the final analysis, the Navy barely ever used Berbera; it found that Djibouti and Mombasa [in Kenya] were much more useful because our sailors could actually take shore leave in those ports; there was no point in going ashore in Berbera.

On economic assistance, I think we had some good programs. We worked hard on rural areas, trying to improve agriculture, animal husbandry and water supplies. We had some very good contractors working in those projects. As I said earlier, one of my principal goals was to pull everyone together. I chaired a meeting at the American Club where the Embassy staff showed considerable resistance to having contractors use the Club. I think they would have objected also to a U.S. military presence, but that they knew was beyond their scope. The staff didn't understand why the contractors, who were being paid “so much money,” needed to have access to the Club. My answer was very simple: “They are Americans.” We took three votes on the question of Club membership. The first two votes were negative on permitting contractors to join; I explained my rationale to the membership again. On the third vote, by a very slim majority, the membership agreed to let contractors join the Club. Eventually the contractors went to work and built the Club an Olympic-size swimming pool. By that time, all American businessmen were allowed to join. They provided the pipe and cement and funds for other work; the contractors supplied the labor and pretty soon we had this large pool. I thought that was a real plus. Even those members who had been opposed to allowing non-official Americans to join the Club were pleased and began to see the advantage of working together.

I think we did have an impact on Somalia's economic scene. Significant changes were made in economic policies which unfortunately were reversed when Siad Barre became so suspicious over the marked increase in the wealth of the northern clans, as I will mention. When Siad Barre reversed himself, that was the beginning of Somalia's long decline; Siad Barre's repressive measures started the civil war. Until that reversal, I was satisfied that progress was being made on the economic front. In the period 1982-84, Somalia was heading in the right direction. But it was only a couple of years later that Siad Barre changed course.

Human rights were another matter. I think the best we were able to do was to prevent them from getting any worse, although this situation also deteriorated severely in the late 1980s. I think we

need to accept that "human rights" was not a phrase that was easily understood by the Somalis. It didn't fit into their clan culture. I think it is also true that in the 1982-84 period, the phrase was not as much a part of the international culture as it has become in more recent years. I have found it interesting to watch the ever increasing importance of "human rights." There are still some nations that take issue with us on the imposition of an international standard of "human rights", but there is certainly considerable more awareness in the international community of that standard now than there used to be.

FRANK G. WISNER
Deputy Assistant Secretary, African Affairs
Washington, DC (1982-1986)

Ambassador Wisner was born in New York on July 2, 1938. He received a bachelor's degree from Princeton University. His career in the foreign service includes posts at Tangier, Algiers, Saigon, Tunis, Bangladesh, Cairo, India, and Vietnam. In addition, he was ambassador to Zambia and Egypt. Ambassador Wisner was interviewed by Richard L. Jackson in 1998.

WISNER: Somalia was the exception where the famine conditions, brought about by protracted drought, were really wreaking the most horrible havoc. After for a long time resisting serious intervention, at the very end of the Bush Administration, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Pentagon relented and decided on an American military intervention in Somalia aimed at feeding Somalis in the most affected areas, with a certain amount of military screen. An international coalition had been built, and I had been given heavy responsibility in this regard. Now the job that was left to the Clinton administration was to extract this feeding mission from Somalia and to take the next step politically. The mobilization for Somalia, the mobilization of the international coalition, the delivery of troops and forces to the dangerous Mogadishu and into the countryside, occupied much of my time as the Administration drew to a close. These issues, plus the ordinary issues of who would be the next ambassadors as the D Committees met and things like that, filled up what turned out to be a very busy six months at the end of my time with the Bush Administration. The Bush Administration ended, and the Clinton team came in. Briefly, on Inauguration Day, I was Acting Secretary of State. I had already been approached both by the incoming team to be told that I would not be asked to stay on as Under Secretary, that I would be replaced by Lynn Davis and to be asked by Les Aspin, my old friend from Vietnam, Congressman, Secretary of Defense-Designate, to join him as Under Secretary for Policy in the Pentagon. I agreed to go to the Pentagon and to join Les. I crossed over the Potomac shortly after the inauguration and joined the Pentagon's ranks and took over while waiting for confirmation. My confirmation was delayed by nearly five months, while the State Department investigators gave the clearance to the FBI and to the White House, and I could finally be cleared out of State. When that was finally done, I became Under Secretary and served for the balance of Les Aspin's tenure as Secretary of Defense.

Q: I was struck, Frank, in your retirement ceremony, you said how much you had admired the

Pentagon's treatment of its people in training, assignments and promotions. Implicit in that, or at least in my mind, was an inference that perhaps they do better than we do at State.

WISNER: I think they do. I really believe that. I think every military officer, every captain looks at every lieutenant, every major looks at every captain, and says how can I find who is going to be my successor, who is going to carry the troops, lead the troops up the hill. Every colonel for every major, every general for every colonel. You are bringing people along. It is leadership instilled in developing your successors. I don't see that as clearly in our service. I don't think we have the same sense of obligation to those who follow us to bring them along with the same single-mindedness. I believe that is so crucial to our purposes. It's true of our Secretary and political appointees, as well, that developing the next generation of leadership in the Foreign Service, when you're only going to be around for a couple years, is not your highest priority. And yet, if you're going to leave a legacy for yourself and capabilities for the nation, you've got to be very careful about these things. So that's why I mentioned it. No, this was a tough time and was no, no, no fun to watch the Secretary of Defense's mandate slip through his fingers. But no harsher test was there than Somalia. I started out, I think, quite wrong headed. I started out believing that the facility with which we brought our forces in and conducted the feeding mission and had come to terms with the different political factions would define the next phase, and that we could pass on the job to the U.N., and then that there would be an orderly process out there. But I believe, from the beginning, that the ultimate issue in Somalia was a political one. The Somalis had to be brought to compose themselves, so that we could finish the mission and get out. We the U.S. or we the U.N. or we U.N. with a huge U.S. role. It's perfectly fatuous to say the U.N. did this, the U.N. did that; we were the dominant force in the U.N. coalition in Somalia. We had the majority of the forces. We provided, even in the U.N. phase, the logistics. We provided Somali political leadership. We provided much of the military leadership under General Bir, the Turkish general. All of these facets were heavily dominated by the United States, and if there were mistakes, and we have to acknowledge them, we share a big burden of the criticism. Essentially we did not get our goals right and set forth clearly. We needed a political settlement among Somalia's factions, not confrontation and a new political order.

Q: Yet the mission changed from the original Bush one of feeding to one of peace-making. How did you see the shift?

WISNER: I was about to go back. Well, the notion was that you needed to finish the feeding. It wasn't fully done. You needed to get something in place in Somalia, so you didn't have another feeding crisis right away, again. There was no government that could provide food to the people that they could eat. You needed some structure of government. I can see the logic of that. But where we began to go wrong was, first, in the handoff to the U.N. to get the American flag down and out. We acted with great haste, and the U.N. and was unable to phase-in in an orderly manner. Second, the political objectives of the next U.N. phase were not clearly set. Boutros, who believed that Aidid and his followers were responsible for much of the problem and needed to be dealt with, began to influence the political shape of the mission, and John Howe I'm not sure ever really saw clearly the road down which the whole U.N. presence would be headed. There came to be a view in the U.N. and in State, that you needed to create a new system of governance, you needed to bring up new leadership in Somalia, you needed to replace all these

rotten, corrupt and murderous warlords with a new generation of Somalis. Well, to this day and until somebody shows me I'm wrong, I believe that was the beginning of serious error because we were unable or unwilling to back that disposition up with the force, the persistence, the commitment that it would take to rebuild the political order of another nation we understood very badly. It didn't take very long for Mr. Aidid to figure out that the outcome of all of this was that he would be history, and he didn't want to be history. He began to react to the U.N. by shooting Pakistanis. We retaliated to that shooting. That retaliation led to other retaliations against other people, and the system started sliding down and we then, trying to put pressure on Aidid, brought in Special Forces elements. I supported that undertaking, but I failed to insist enough on the definition of political objectives which military pressure could support.

Q: As we went in there originally on the relief, mercy mission in response to television journalism and, essentially, an outcry around the United States that we had to do something, and, as the mission shifted, there wasn't, it seems to me, a real U.S. interest in that country, but was there a feeling among US. policymakers that we bore some special responsibility in Somalia for having pumped in arms, along with the Soviet Union, in the Cold War period?

WISNER: Certainly not. No. No, not at all. The American weapons in the Somali inventory played absolutely no role whatsoever. Somalis were killing each other with fair abandon with AK 47's and 12.5 millimeter machine guns mounted on the back of jeeps. There were no American machine guns there. Our stuff had been at the higher military tech end, and the Somali street fighters weren't using that stuff. They wanted stuff that they could fire--B-40 rockets--and they were all out of the Soviet arsenal, not out of the American one. That argument didn't come up. The critical mistake of the estimate was not to see this political situation heading towards a sharp deterioration, to have misestimated the strike determination and capability of Aidid. That we didn't see.

Q: I'm struck that these are two major instances - Vietnam and Somalia - that you have lived through where the U.S. estimate on the ground was basically faulty and we pulled out under very tragic situations. Are there reflections looking at those two situations that you have or want to comment on?

WISNER: We did it in Lebanon, too. You make the best intelligence calls you can. You do the best estimate you can of the situation, given the facts available to you. Of course, in Somalia we had no facts because we closed our embassy out several years earlier. There was no intelligence network. There was no way of knowing the dynamics of the Somali situation. Had we sat back and done a careful analysis of Somalia and its history and its people and their attitudes and everything, we would have never done the humanitarian mission. Could we have done the humanitarian mission in another way? If the truth be known, my recommendation was that we never go in with U.S. forces, that we let others do the force side and we provide the logistics. This was way, back in the Bush period. I never saw the wisdom of putting our people on the ground and felt that every time you put Americans on the ground with a rifles in their hands they were lightning rods. Because we were WE, we're the biggest player in the world picture and coming after us is an interesting target. The fundamentalists and other people would get stirred up. In this case, we pursued the wrong political strategy. We never gave the impetus to creating a

Somali political outcome that I think we should have.

PETER S. BRIDGES
Ambassador
Somalia (1984-1986)

Ambassador Bridges was born in New Orleans and raised in Chicago. He attended Dartmouth College and Columbia University and served in the US Army in France. He entered the Foreign Service in 1957 and held positions in Panama, Moscow, Italy, and served as Ambassador to Somalia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2003.

Q: Today is the 17th of November, 2003. Peter, what was the situation in Somalia when you arrived? How about internally, and economically? Then we'll talk about relations with the United States.

BRIDGES: I'll answer your questions. I do want to say that I wrote a full and frank account of my time in Somalia in my first book, published in 2000. I say, apologetically, that I may not be able to add much that isn't in that book.

Q: Still, maybe a certain amount of duplication. I have a feeling that some people will not have access to the book, but they will have access to this.

BRIDGES: They may not have access for now, but I do hope they'll buy it. Anyway, the situation was roughly this: the Somali dictatorship had existed since 1969. Mohammed Siad Barre, the commander of the Somali armed forces, had taken power in '69 and had led his country increasingly on a pro-Soviet course. American relations with Somalia deteriorated; we broke off aid to Somalia after we learned that two or three ships bearing the Somali flag had been trading with North Vietnam. We were required by the legislation at the time to stop trade with Somalia, and that further exacerbated things. Then in 1977 the Somalis invaded Ethiopia, and by 1978 it was a full scale war and the Somali army occupied a good part of eastern Ethiopia, which was largely inhabited by ethnic Somalis. It was a quandary for the Soviet Union, which was good friends with Siad Barre in Somalia and also good friends with Ethiopia, ruled by Mengistu Haile Mariam. So what shall Moscow do? Should it support Ethiopia against Somalia, or vice versa? Or try to try separate itself from the conflict? In the end Moscow decided Ethiopia was the more important friend and ally, so a lot of Soviet advisors went into Ethiopia, the Soviets brought some thousands of Cuban troops to Ethiopia, and in the end they pushed the Somalis back over the old Somali frontier. Then Siad Barre, when he heard that the chief Soviet advisor directing operations against him in Ethiopia was none other than the Soviet general who had been his own chief Soviet advisor earlier, was enraged and he gave the Soviet government something like three or four days to get all of their advisors out of Somalia. And there were something like 3,000 of them. He did not break diplomatic relations, but he reduced the size of the Soviet embassy in

Mogadishu to a very small number.

Slowly Siad Barre turned towards the West and the United States, and we were slow in agreeing to his requests for aid, but in the end we did so. People began to argue in Washington that Somalia occupied a very strategic position. The argument carried, not just in the Executive Branch but on Capitol Hill, and we began to give aid. Then in the 1980s there was a disastrous drought in East Africa, affecting Ethiopia but also Somalia. Hundreds of thousands of refugees fled over the border into Somalia, fleeing the Ethiopian army and war, and the situation was made worse by the serious drought and then starvation. So when I got there in December 1984, we had a huge aid program, the biggest I think in military and civilian aid in all of Sub-Saharan Africa. It amounted to probably 100 million dollars a year, mostly in civilian aid, much of it food aid that went through the UN World Food Programme to feed the refugees living in the camps administered by the UNHCR in Somalia. A lot of it, too, was developmental aid going into projects, but as I made clear in my book there was not a lot of development that resulted. There was also U.S. financial assistance, and military aid which was designed to help Somalia protect itself from incursions, which were continuing, by Mengistu's army in Ethiopia. We didn't want to replace the hundreds of Soviet tanks that Somalia had used to invade Ethiopia, but we did provide them with 100 old Sherman tanks that had been in the Italian army and that we had refurbished, and we provided a lot of anti-tank weapons. Again, as I said in my book, I'm not ashamed that we provided these weapons, although some of them were used in the Somali civil war. The only ones that I really regret were a half dozen large artillery pieces, 155 millimeter rifles, which later, after I left, were hauled up to the north of Somalia and were used to batter the city of Hargeisa which had risen up against Siad Barre. Anyway, the economic situation was not good at all, development had not progressed the way it was supposed to from our aid projects. I will say that the Western European, the Japanese, the Chinese and U.N. aid projects were in many cases not more effective than our own work.

Q: Were the Somalis a natural trading people?

BRIDGES: It depends on what Somalis you're talking about. The greatest numbers of the population were nomads living in arid grasslands of the interior; these were people who didn't care for the sea and really didn't care for the Somalis along the coast. Then there were fishermen. You had a number of towns spread out along the Somali coast, both along the Gulf of Aden in the north and along the Indian Ocean, which were very old indeed. As I mentioned in my book, there is a document called the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea which seems to have been written about 100 AD. The author was a Roman citizen of Greek origin living in Egypt, probably a mariner. And it describes the ports that you see when you come out of the Gulf of Aden into the Indian Ocean. It tells first of all the ports that you come to in Southern Arabia and India, and then it tells which ports you come to on the right side, along the Somali coast. So there was a tradition that you could say goes back two thousand years. And Mogadishu was certainly an old trading town, as were other towns on the coast. In dhows, which are at best not very large vessels, the Somalis would trade with the Arabian Gulf and even across the water to India. There is this curious regime of winds where the northeast monsoon blows half a year out of the Himalayas and Arabia, and then comes down to the Somali coast, basically going southward, and then stops and completely reverses; starting in April and May you have the southwest monsoon that goes up the

coast. So indeed they could sail to India on one monsoon and come back on the other.

Q: You were saying that the heart of Africa is overplayed as being strategic. Was it more a concern of what we had in the Pacific islands, what we called "strategic denial?" In other words, we didn't want the Soviets to build something in Masawa or Mogadishu. Did we keep them out, or were they doing something there?

BRIDGES: The fact is that they had done things in Somalia, most notably two very long runways at airports; one in Berbera, which was 15,000 feet long, and another inland from Mogadishu about a hundred miles, at Bale Dogle. We were given access to those after the Soviets broke off most of their relations with Moscow, but we never put in anything in their place. There was actually some suspicion that we were doing secret things in Berbera and at some point, before I got there, basically the Americans said to foreign journalists, "Take a look for yourselves." The fact is that during the time I was in Somalia, the American presence at the huge airport in Berbera amounted to a little control tower that was manned by a company that had a contract with the Navy. I think on the average of once a week a reconnaissance plane would come off the Indian Ocean into Berbera and spend the night. So we didn't put any military force into Somalia at all. We did agree to do two port contracts. One was at Berbera in the north, where we agreed to rebuild an old Soviet-built quay for the port. This was not terribly important, it would be for Somali civilian use, but we would have access to it if it came to a war. We also agreed to rebuild the quay at Kismayo, the southernmost port in Somalia, which USAID had built in the 1960s; unfortunately the concrete had been mixed with salty water and it was coming apart. So we rebuilt that when I was there, with the U.S. Navy being the subcontractor under AID, and we did a pretty good job.

Q: One of the great complaints when the whole civil war erupted was that there were too many weapons. Were they our weapons? What I gathered mostly was that they had RPGs and AK-47s, which were Soviet weapons.

BRIDGES: I've never seen a good estimate of what was ours. In any case we did supply the army earlier with 105 mm. rifles, jeep mounted and for anti-tank use, and we did provide some small arms, but I believe that most of the weaponry that was on the streets of Mogadishu during the civil war had come from other places. I read not very long ago in the press about the arms being brought in to Somalia from Yemen. There is a big world arms market, and the Somalis had money to buy arms and they did so. I don't think that too much of what was used in the civil war was ours.

Q: You were there until when?

BRIDGES: I left in May of 1986 and came back to Washington, and left government service. I went back to Somalia once in late 1988, on behalf of Shell Oil Company.

Q: Let's talk about this '84 to '86 period. How did you deal with General Siad Barre?

BRIDGES: I dealt with him at first hand, and rather often. When I presented my credentials to

him, he said that he would want to see me sometimes on short notice and that he sometimes liked to see people late at night because that was his working schedule, and that turned out to be the case. So, sometimes with some advance notice, and sometimes with really none, I'd go over to Villa Somalia, which was his hilltop palace, and spend an hour or two with Siad Barre. Usually I would go by myself; I decided it was preferable to have it one on one, because the first time I went I found that he was the only Somali at the table, except for some guy in the background who might have been taking notes. I have no doubt that the room was wired, and there was probably a stenographer who made a record for him of what was being said.

Q: What were the subjects?

BRIDGES: Oh, he always had complaints; he was a wily fellow, he no doubt saw himself as very clever. He complained that we weren't giving enough aid, that we were deliberately keeping American business out of Somalia, which is absurd. When he told me that, I told him on no uncertain terms that it was his government that was keeping America business out of Somalia. If an American businessman came to Mogadishu, as sometimes happened, he would get hassled at the airport, he would find it hard to deal with the Somalis and frankly he would be asked for money; they were very corrupt. In one case an American businessman leaving was searched at the Mogadishu airport and they found a paycheck that he had brought into Mogadishu from his employer, and they accused him of trading illegal currencies and put him in jail. We got him out of jail, but obviously this guy did not leave with a good impression of Somalia. I told the president that it was not by chance that down the coast in Kenya you had big beach resorts in Mombasa and there were none in Somalia, although hotel chains had sometimes come to take a look. Anyway we had frank conversations. I didn't take notes; my memory was pretty good, I'd take an occasional small note. At some point Siad Barre said to me, "Why don't you take notes? Petterson always took notes." This was Don Petterson, my predecessor once removed. I said, "Mr. President, you know that Somalis have a reputation for highly developed memories. I pride myself on a good memory and I assure you that I will send Washington a comprehensive report on our conversations, with our own recommendations. These are very frank, but if you really like, I will bring my cable next time for you to read." He laughed and said, "Maybe you'd better not."

Q: Were there any things we were trying to do in Somalia?

BRIDGES: We hoped, of course, for a better regime. From what I can judge and from what I've read, in the initial years of independence, from 1960 until 1969 when the coup d'etat occurred, Somalia had a fairly good functioning democratic republic; not perfect, there was corruption. One scholar has written that the political parties were nothing but emanations of clans. Still it was a half decent system. The Italians had come in and provided them with assistance in writing their constitution and legal system. After 1969, in the first years of Siad Barre's dictatorship, he was careful to include the major clans in his system, there was probably a fair degree of support for his government. Soviet style socialism was popular in much of Africa during those days, so a lot of intellectuals who considered themselves socialists probably gave him close support. That changed after he introduced police measures; he got the East Germans to build a prison for political prisoners out near the Ethiopian border, and the situation deteriorated. Still, when I was

there neither I nor anybody I knew was forecasting a civil war. I was in touch with a few Somalis who were well-meaning men and who expected a better future for their country.

I recall that when I first got to Mogadishu I could walk on the streets and there were tea houses were full of young men sitting, talking, and getting an occasional bite to eat, clearly unemployed, clearly unemployable. There was a population of about a million people in Mogadishu, which had had a population of only 75,000 when independence came a quarter-century earlier. I saw these men as a recipe for trouble, but I didn't think it would be civil war; I thought it would be a wave of crime because of all these dissatisfied young men. But they were no doubt the material used by the warlords when the civil war came.

Q: Were these warlords a part of the politics at that point?

BRIDGES: Later, during the civil war, there was one so-called warlord, General Aidid, who died a peaceful death after Jonathan Howe tried him for war crimes. I didn't know Aidid. The other one, Ali Mahdi, was a successful Somali businessman who among other things built a hotel, and I met him when we went to dinner there a couple of times, but no one was thinking that either of them would end up leading a civil war in Mogadishu. Now, some years before I reached Mogadishu, Siad Barre had declared that there were no more clans, which was absurd. There were clans, and groups of clans, and as the years went on Siad Barre increasingly excluded from government positions any people who were not from his family of clans, the Darod, and even from his own immediate clan, the Marehan. Still, when I was there the Second Vice President of the country was a leader of the Hawiye, the group of clans from central Somalia. The Minister of Interior, who had a lot of blood on his hands but was also a thoughtful man, was from the Dolbahante clan in the northeast. I can't remember all the clan affiliations, but between 1984 and '86 there were still people in the government who came from various clans, although Siad Barre was beginning more and more to concentrate power, especially economic power, in the hands of his own Marehan clan.

Q: How did Somalia fit together? You were talking about Mogadishu, and what used to be Somaliland, and the interior. At your time, how did they fit as far as the governments were running them?

BRIDGES: By the time I arrived in 1984 the Isaq group of clans, largely concentrated in the north, in what had been British Somaliland, was largely dissatisfied; some were put in jail. At the beginning many were basically dissatisfied with Siad Barre because he wasn't giving them the jobs they wanted in the government. Later he took some very cruel measures against them. So a kind of guerrilla movement formed, based in Ethiopia, that raided into Somalia out of Ethiopia, and without doubt had assistance from Mengistu's regime in Ethiopia. At that point it was not a terribly serious threat to the central government. The first time I visited the north, I was given an armed escort to go from Berbera, on the coast, upcountry to Hargeisa, which was inland and basically the capital of the area. There was a truck in front of me with a machine gun on the roof and all around me there were these young tommy-gunners with AK-47s. Young gunners always made me worried because I didn't know how responsible or careful they were with their weapons, but in any case we didn't run into any trouble. The uprising against Siad Barre in the

north was at that point not so serious, but it was getting somewhat worse. At the time I left in mid-1986 you still could travel around the country and not expect to run into difficulty.

Q: Where we were seeing policy-wise? Somalia as being a piece of the great bane of checking the rather nasty regime in Ethiopia? That was not a pro-American government.

BRIDGES: No, on the contrary. In fact before I went to Mogadishu, Vernon Walters came to Rome: a man I knew slightly, who after that was ambassador to Germany and also Deputy Director of Central Intelligence; he was a curious, interesting man. He had come to Rome from Addis Ababa, and he had been sent to Addis, as I learned when I had him over for a drink, he had been sent to Addis by Washington because the Ethiopians had imprisoned an American embassy officer, said to be a CIA officer. They had imprisoned him and they had tortured him. How many governments would dare to not only imprison but torture a foreign diplomat? These were pretty nasty people indeed. We didn't want to see them extend their influence, nor did we want the Soviet Union to extend its influence in East Africa. I referred in my book, I think in a footnote, to a work by Brzezinski, written during the Carter administration, saying that if Somalia fell under the Soviet Union, then the future of Saudi Arabia was in question, and Saudi Arabia would fall. It was a sort of Horn of Africa domino theory. Earlier, in the days of the big confrontation and civil war in Angola, Kissinger had said something to the effect that Angola was the prime meeting point in the great confrontation between Moscow and Washington. I felt that was exaggerated nonsense. Which is not to say that the Soviets didn't put some importance on their position in East Africa; they had built a big naval dockyard and dry dock facility on the coast of Ethiopia. They had a certain military presence in Ethiopia, and of course when a ship comes down the Red Sea bound for the Indian Ocean, it has to pass the coasts of Ethiopia and Somalia, so it could be intercepted. The Soviets, one could imagine, could close off access to the Suez Canal. The Soviets had invaded in Afghanistan in December 1979, and there were people who were saying in the 1980s that the Soviet army wanted to march south from Afghanistan across Pakistan to the Indian Ocean. Again, I didn't think there was much likelihood of that; but unfortunately there were people not just in the West but in the Soviet Union who said these things. So there was talk about using Somalia as a big U.S. logistical base in case we had to fight the Soviet Union in the Indian Ocean, but that wasn't much of an argument to me for building up a huge American presence in Somalia.

Q: In a way it was part of the great game of Africa. People were throwing these things around, particularly the Soviets, who were using Cuban troops.

BRIDGES: I have written that to me the Soviet presence in Ethiopia was in part a kind of romantic exaggeration. The Russians did think and still think of history; and they could not forget that in the 1890s they had military advisors helping the emperor of Ethiopia in his war with the Italians. And the Russian church had a longstanding relationship with the Ethiopian church.

Q: Were you getting any instructions from Washington? Did we handle policy there in dealing with it?

BRIDGES: I was very pleased to find that American ambassadors in Africa were given more freedom than, say, embassies in Europe. This was said to be because there were so many embassies in Africa that it was hard for the African bureau to write detailed instructions to all of them. At the time we didn't have much in the way of an intercept-free telephone system. That is to say, that if you got on the phone and called the State Department, with few exceptions it was going to be on an open line. The open line out of Mogadishu was a terrible line. My wife was working in Rome for much of the time that I was in Somalia, initially for the Internal Revenue Service. So I would go back from my office to my house in Mogadishu in the afternoon, having asked my secretary to tell the Somali central telephone office that I'd like to place a call to a number in Rome. It was terrible. Sometimes the service was so bad that I would be home and the phone would ring and someone would say "Bridge?" and I would say yes, and the woman would say, "Roma." And then I would hear my wife on the phone but meanwhile my telephone was continuing to ring. My conversations with my wife were made somewhat more difficult by the fact that in the background was this loud ringing of the telephone. Let me add that in spite of the lack of classified phone service, in the 1970s and '80s our embassies in Western Europe talked pretty freely on the phone with Washington, perhaps more freely than they should have done. I have no doubt that most of this was being intercepted by intelligence services that had the capability.

In any case, while Washington kept close tabs on our embassies in Europe, I had a relatively free hand in Mogadishu as I think my colleagues did in other African posts. We made use of it, I did myself benefit from this freedom a couple of times, as I have written in my book. One time came when the Somali and Libyan governments announced that they were restoring diplomatic relations, which is something we very much wanted the Somalis not to do. There were rumors that the Libyans were paying the Somalis a billion dollars, which sounds like a huge amount of money for something not worth that much, but Nimeiri, the former president of Sudan, had recently written in the Washington Post that he had been offered several billion dollars by the Libyans. What seemed more credible to me was the story that circulated in the diplomatic corps, that the foreign minister of Somalia, who was the stepbrother of Siad Barre, had been given a million dollars by the Libyans. That seems a more credible figure. Anyway, they resumed relations. They issued a really nasty joint statement saying that Libya and Somalia were going to fight imperialism together. I went to the foreign minister and said, "What imperialism? Are you referring to the United States?" And he said, "Oh, no, we are referring to the Soviet Union." Supposedly they were restricting Libyans to four diplomats, a very small embassy, in Mogadishu. Within a month or two, I was told by our CIA station chief, who was a marvelous man, that there were fourteen Libyans in their embassy. So I said, "Do you think you can get authorization for me to give their names to the foreign ministry?" And he said, "Yes." And he did. So I went to see either the minister or permanent secretary of the foreign ministry, and planked down this list of fourteen names, and said "Where's your agreement now?" I don't think we told them that we knew that one of the fourteen was the kind of diplomat that plants bombs. The last experience of his that had come to our attention was that he had tried to plant a plastic bomb in the American club in Khartoum, in Sudan. I said to the foreign minister that I was concerned about all this mess and that if I should be assassinated, I had told my Deputy, John Hirsch, to cut off all aid immediately and go back to Washington for consultation, and I could assure him that it would be a very long time before he saw an American chargé d'affaires again. And then I said that if a

member of my staff was killed, I myself would cut off all aid and I would go back to Washington, and it would certainly be a long time before he saw me again. Later he told me he had sent a message to the Libyan foreign minister about all this. In any case, as far as I know the Libyans did lay off the Americans. Anyway, having done this I cabled Washington what I had done, and I said, "Okay?" And they basically said, "Yeah." If I had asked for instructions to make such an approach, I don't know what the result would have been but it probably would have taken a long time to get an okay to go ahead.

I did sort of the same kind of thing later. The director of our AID mission, Louis Cohen, who was a very able man, decided to have a reception at his house for all the Somalis whom AID had sent off to the U.S. to take courses. I said that I thought it was a fine idea and I would be happy to attend and make some remarks. So I went to Cohen's house and there were Lou and Barbara Cohen and just two or three American people from AID, and no Somalis. It was time for people to be coming, and I said "What is it?" And Lou said, "There are cops down at the corner and they are preventing any Somali from coming into our house, even our own employees." So I said to my driver, "Come on, Scerif, let's go down to the corner and talk to these guys." They were probably agents of the NSS, the National Security Service. I started talking to them in English, but they made gestures that they didn't understand. I tried Italian with the same result, and my Somali was not good enough to use on this occasion. So I asked Scerif to translate, and I asked them what they were doing and why they were doing it and all they would say was that they were acting on orders. And no Somali ever showed up at the Cohens' reception. Not too many hours after this I learned from our CIA station chief that a certain minister had gone to Siad Barre and said, "Lou Cohen is planning on throwing a reception to form an American party and we have to stop it." And Siad Barre had said, "Okay, stop it." Hence the NSS men on the corner. So I went to see the Minister of the Presidency, Abdullahi Addou, a man who had been for ten years their ambassador in Washington, and I said that this was terrible and I was considering stopping our aid programs, it was simply unacceptable and I was thinking about terminating all aid. A couple of days later the President invited me and the senior members of our embassy to a stag dinner and said that he was very sorry and that he wanted to make up for it, that what had happened had been the action of a subordinate acting without authorization. But we knew that the President himself had done this thing. I reported to Washington what I had done without instructions, and they were fine with it.

Q: Was there sort of a residual life for Americans, or were the Somalis their own people and not thinking about anybody else?

BRIDGES: Well, again, I'm on record rendering a kind of judgment on the Somalis as people, which is not only my judgment. I.M. Lewis, the greatest foreign expert on Somalia, described a certain kind of xenophobia and chauvinism which is often present in Somalia, and I think he is right. There is a Somali proverb that I quoted in my book that says that a man who does not take revenge is not a man. They were very quick to seize on affronts, things like that. Light-skinned foreigners were clearly easily identifiable and the kids would first put out their hands and ask for bakshish, and then you'd turn your head and they would throw a rock at you. I had Somali friends; two or three of the most interesting and admirable people I met in Africa were Somalis; they were brave and honest men. If we're talking in generalities, I think there is such a thing as

national characteristics, but one can easily exaggerate in describing members of a particular nation as being miserly or aggressive or repressed simply because they are French or American or Chinese. Having said this, I did see in Somalis a certain trend towards xenophobia. The Somalis are also very proud and independent-minded, maybe because they have managed to exist in a very difficult, arid environment for thousands of years. The young Somali man in a nomad family will be sent off at the age of ten with a string of camels to forage for, and he will be by himself for a couple of weeks, and he's got a lot of his family's capital in his hand. So they learn very early to be self-reliant and independent.

Q: Were there any major visits while you were there?

BRIDGES: We had no cabinet visits. We had a visit from the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Bill Taft, and his wife Julia Taft who since then has held very responsible positions in the State Department although at this moment she did not. We had visits by two commanding generals of U.S. Central Command, Robert Kingston, whom I had met at CENTCOM Headquarters before I went to Somalia, and his successor General George Crist. We had a visit by the commander of our little squadron in the Persian Gulf stationed at Bahrein. There were some other general officers who came. I was hoping Chester Crocker, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, would come, but he was always busy as could be with other problems, especially the problem of Namibia which was still under South African control. We had one Congressional visit, by Howard Wolpe who was a ranking Democrat in the House Foreign Affairs Committee. As I have written, he was said to be very anti-Somali, and I couldn't believe all the things that I heard about him, but the Somalis believed them, and they didn't want to see him; they didn't want him to come and they were not going to receive him at any level. I told the President that if Wolpe didn't get a fair reception, it was going to hurt the American relationship and specifically the possibility of getting new aid money out of the House of Representatives. So Wolpe came, and he was even more uncritically anti-Somali then I expected, and pro-Ethiopian; I could never understand the reason for this, but as I mentioned in my book, David Korn, a good friend of mine, we had gone into the Service together, was chargé d'affaires in Ethiopia all the time that I was in Somalia. Korn described in a book of his how uncritical Wolpe was of the horrid Mengistu regime in Ethiopia. It's difficult to imagine how he could take such a position but he did.

Q: Were there any sort of parties you could talk to? Did we try to sponsor democracy or anything of that nature?

BRIDGES: In my recollection I never had instructions to try to advance the cause of democracy. We did try to advance the cause of economic reform, but that didn't go too far. I made it very clear in a letter that I wrote to all the ministers which I reprinted in my book, that we weren't trying to tell the Somalis how to run their country, we understood how proud and independent-minded they were, but that on the other hand we were giving them a lot of aid, and as a principal aid donor, we certainly needed to be sure that our aid was being used correctly. Dollars were scarce, I said, and we had to account to our Congress as to what we were doing and how the money was being spent. A couple of ministers told me that they thought my letter was great, privately. But I won't say that it had any effect.

Q: Did the rest of Africa, particularly South Africa and Namibia, play any role?

BRIDGES: Well, the South Africans of course were willing to deal with whatever part of black Africa would deal with them. This was, again, the apartheid regime in South Africa. There were two Somali air forces. There was the regular Somali air force, which flew the planes that the Soviets had left behind in 1978, and there was also a small air force which was flown by white pilots from southern Africa. These flew British made planes, Hawker Hunters, I believe. Every now and then one of these planes would fly over Mogadishu. One time I was at a hotel in Mogadishu and someone pointed out a white man sitting with others, and he was said to be the commander of the small white squadron. Somalia would deal with the devil if he promised aid. Siad Barre had diplomatic relations with the Order of Malta, that most Catholic order, because the Order of Malta had agreed to build them a leprosarium.

Q: It became critical later on. How was the food distribution working and who was doing this?

BRIDGES: The distribution to the refugee camps of the food provided by the UN World Food Programme was in the hands of CARE, the American agency. They had a very large operation in Mogadishu; they had their own warehouses and their own motor pool to carry the food from the warehouses up to the refugee camps, which was quite a long distance. They even had their own mechanic training school so they could have a force that could service their trucks. The head of the CARE operation was an American named Mike Kamstra, a very admirable man. They did all they could, with AID looking over their shoulders to make sure that food wasn't leaking out and being sold to people. The problem came in the camps, and it started with numbers. The Somalis told us that there were more than 700,000 refugees in the UNHCR camps. We thought there were probably no more than 500,000. We could never get UNHCR and the Somali refugee administration to undertake a reliable count. We, the U.S., did not supply food for 700,000, but even so I have no doubt that somehow a lot of food that was destined for the refugees was leaking out and being sold on the market. I have no doubt that Somali officials were involved, and that Siad Barre was getting his share. But there was the question of proving it, and we couldn't. It's not that AID was lacking in auditors, but there are limits to what a foreign mission can do in a foreign country to check on all this.

Q: How were relations with Kenya?

BRIDGES: Somewhat improved. They had been quite poor. Somalia became independent in 1960, and Kenya in 1963. The Somalis expected that on the independence of Kenya, that Somalia would get the northeastern part of Kenya which was inhabited by ethnic Somalis. But that was not agreed to between the British and Kenyans, so the Republic of Kenya kept to its old border with Somalia, and the Somalis broke off relations with the British and I think with Kenya too. It was a long time before they changed their stance, but they did; the relationship was much better when I was there. There was a very able Kenyan ambassador named John Siparo, and he was really one of the best in the diplomatic corps in Mogadishu. He himself did quite a lot. The president of Kenya at the time was Daniel Arap Moi, whose corruption was already becoming evident, but let me give the devil his due; he had his good side and he understood that he should

try for a decent relationship with Somalia. He also understood some of the problems of the population explosion in Africa. I can remember that he used to preach to his people, it seems to me I read a speech by arap Moi every time I went to Nairobi, on the need to limit Kenya's population. He would say, "Look at the Europeans, how many children do they have? Two? And they're progressing. And how many do we have? Six? There is a link that we must understand, we can't have huge families any more if you want to get ahead in the world." And then of course at one point Pope John Paul II came to Nairobi, and said an open air Mass, and as I recall his homily was on the general thesis of multiply and cover the earth. So he undid a lot of the work that Daniel Arap Moi did.

Q: What about U.N. votes? Was that a productive exercise?

BRIDGES: You would think that as the former head of U.N. political affairs I would be deeply concerned, but I didn't expect too much from the Somalis in the U.N. General Assembly or the specialized agencies. I think they must have voted with the African group, if not with the Arabs. They certainly didn't support us on Israel, but again no one else did.

Q: Where did the Somalis fit? There's black Africa, and then sort of Arab Northern Africa...

BRIDGES: Well, linguistically the Somali language belongs to the Afro-Asian group of languages which includes Oromo, Amharic, and the Semitic languages, both Arab and Hebrew. There are linguists who claim to find links between the Afro-Asian group and Indo-European, and there are some extremist linguists who claim to identify links between all human languages, even those spoken in the New Guinea highlands. Certainly I think that there are links between Somali and Indo-European. I used to sit in my bed at night sometimes, with a big dictionary that had a glossary of Indo-European roots and my Somali dictionary, and try to find possible cognates. And I found some, I made a list of 30 or 40 words.

Ethnically, genetically, the Somalis are somewhat distinguished from many other Africans; many of them resemble the Nilotic peoples, they most often are thin, fine-featured and fairly tall and dark-skinned. But on the coast and in parts of Mogadishu there is a lighter-skinned population which undoubtedly has ties to people who came from Persia, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Gulf many years ago. I was just in Vermont last week, I was invited to speak at a couple of colleges there, but most importantly to speak to the Vermont Council on World Affairs, and my subject was "Somalia, Somalis, and Vermont" because about 12,000 Somali Bantus are being brought to this country as refugees, and some 200 to 300 of them are supposed to settle in Vermont. The Somali Bantus are very interesting and rather sad people. In the early decades of the 19th century, most of the East African coast was under the control of the Sultans of Muscat and Oman. In fact the Sultan of Muscat established his capital in East Africa, in Zanzibar, in 1832. Anyway part of this East African empire's dealings was in slaves, and tens of thousands of Africans were brought north as slaves from what is now Mozambique and Tanzania, up into Somalia in the 1800s. Most of them were settled in the two river valleys in Somalia and although they were animists and not Somali speakers, they eventually became Sunni Muslims like all the Somalis, and began to speak Somali and were adopted into existing Somali clans. But they were always to some extent objects of discrimination, and now a bunch of them had gotten out and were living in a UNHCR camp in

Kenya. There were other small interesting ethnic groups in Somalia who were traditional smiths or medicine men, but their numbers were not very great. Most Somalis are ethnic Somalis and they seem to have been there for a long time. But every Somali clan has a mythic ancestor, an eponymous ancestor who came across the water from Arabia and brought the Muslim faith to the clan, and of course brought some new genes. There's no doubt that there was such a migration from Arabia but the number of Arabs who moved into Somalia has never been very great.

Q: What I've noticed is that we have here in Washington a large Horn of Africa community, and these are some of the most attractive females and even the guys are attractive.

BRIDGES: They tend to be a very handsome people. One of the leading models in the world was or is Iman, and she is a Somali; she was the one who appeared in the film Out of Africa as the African mistress of Robert Redford's friend. Many of them are very beautiful, there's no question about that.

Q: Peter, when you left there, how did you leave Somalia?

BRIDGES: I left on good terms. Some people said, "Oh, you left early," although Bob Oakley had not been there that long, and a number of ambassadors had never spent two years. But I had had enough of Mr. Reagan, although I didn't disagree with his Africa policy, or rather his administration's Africa policy. I had incidentally the pleasure of entertaining his daughter Maureen Reagan; she headed the American delegation to the United Nations conference on women in Nairobi, and decided after the conference to come up to Somalia. We were pleased that she came; we sent our military attaché plane to Nairobi to pick up her and several members of the delegation. We took her to see a couple of refugee camps, and gave her a luncheon at home. It was attended by just two men: the Somali foreign minister and me. My wife was there, and a number of Somali ladies also. It worked out okay. But I was ready to leave government and ready to retire, I was not quite 54 years old and I had more than 20 years service. I was still young enough to do other things in life and I very much didn't want to transfer from Mogadishu back to the Department of State. I had many friends in the Department but it was a place I never liked working in because it was so bureaucratic, and indeed I never liked the building itself; it always reminded me more of a state hospital than a foreign ministry. So I left government. I called on George Vest, the Director of the Foreign Service, in June of 1986 and he kindly gave me two flags and a cup of tea, and I was on my way.

JOHN HELM
Foreign Buildings Officer
Mogadishu (1986-1988)

Mr. Helm was born and raised in Tennessee and educated at Carson Newman College. Entering the Foreign Service in 1973, he served in posts throughout the world, primarily in the field of Administration, including General Services, Communications and Foreign Buildings. His overseas posts include: Banjul,

Gambia; Panama City, Panama; Seville, Spain; Quito, Ecuador; Mogadishu, Somalia; Tbilisi, Georgia; Bonn, Germany and San Salvador, El Salvador. His Washington assignments were also in the field of Administration. Mr. Helm was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q: This is tape 3, side 1 with John Helm. What was Mogadishu like when you got there in '86?

HELM: Hot. We were on the airplane about to land in Mogadishu and Gail and I were traveling with an infant. I had a stroller that folded like an umbrella. Lots of luggage, all sorts of baby stuff, and the plane was crowded. We'd been sitting next to an American going to US AID. We got there he asked if there was anything he could do to help, and I said, "Would you please carry the stroller and meet me at the bottom of the ramp." He said he would, and we got a little bit separated. I was standing in the middle of the airplane looking out a window, when I saw an African man running, fast as he could, away from the airplane with my stroller. I never saw it again. So my introduction to the post was having my stroller stolen, the airport was chaos, I also had a dog in a shipping kennel and it was hot and I really didn't know what I'd gotten myself into.

But, you know when you meet your wife and she's living in a tin shack in Farafenni, Gambia, you know that you're with someone that's tougher than the norm. We stuck it out and eventually had a pretty good life there.

Q: Who was the ambassador while you were there?

HELM: Frank Crigler; he was a bit imperial, himself. But the interesting thing there was that we owned this compound, and admin and GSO offices were at the compound. The Chancery was in horrible little building downtown in the middle of the city. The ambassador's residence was on the far side of the city. FBO was just re-starting the construction project when I got there. Part of the reason I went there was my FBO connections for the construction project. I seldom saw Ambassador Crigler, and it was a blessing. I had a very large GSO crew, three assistant GSOs, a semi-locally hired American auto mechanic, twelve Filipinos - third country nationals, four hundred Somali FSNs and another four hundred local guards. It was an empire.

Q: What was living like then?

HELM: Everything was made out of concrete. The houses were nice. We had secured them. You locked yourself with a steel gate into the residential part of the house, and then you locked yourself into your bedroom. You had 24-hour guards. The security situation was not good. But it was petty theft sort of things. It tended not to be violent. The feeling was that if they broke into your house and started stealing things, just let them have it. But you locked yourself in to protect yourself.

When I was in Washington, I had a dog, an American Eskimo Spitz. I lived in DC, and my house had been broken into when the dog was a pup, and the dog was kicked around rather viciously. We surmised that it was black teenagers that had done this. The dog went with us to Africa, and

the dog grew up and spent the rest of her life trying to extract revenge on a black teenager. My house was never bothered, one of the very few in the whole mission. They never even attempted to rob my house. I had a guard and he would walk around the inside of the perimeter wall, around the yard, and the dog had a path about three feet inside of his path. They formed concentric circles. The guard would never cross the dog's path, and the dog would compel the guard to stay on his path, and they would walk around together with the dog growling at him. But my house was never robbed.

The social life: you went to other people's houses or you had them at your house, or you went to the Marine house. That was the total social life. There was a little club at the K-7 compound with a swimming pool. People who had small children tended to hang around together, take the children swimming.

Q: Could you get out in the country at all?

HELM: No. The government required us to get a special visa to go more than a set number of kilometers out of the city limits. If you drove out of the city a very short way you came to a guard house, and if you didn't have a visa to go into the countryside, you couldn't go. I never went.

Q: Did you go over to Nairobi for recreation from time to time?

HELM: A couple of times I went to Nairobi. The first Christmas we were there, Jeffrey was about 17 months, we flew to Nairobi before Christmas so that Jeffrey could see a Christmas tree. We went to the New Stanley Hotel and saw a Christmas tree. That was a big deal. Stayed there a few days and then flew back.

Q: Later, the situation had gone septic, the technicals running around with machine guns.

HELM: I'll explain to you what happened from my perspective. Remember, I had a huge national staff. All five tribes were represented on my payroll. These were people who had been working together in a mixed group for a long time. They all knew each other, they got along well, they were all good people. Now I don't know what you've heard about the cause of the problems in Somalia, but this is my understanding of it.

There had been a longstanding war with Ethiopia and a group of men who were against the dictator Siad Barre [Maj. Gen Mohamed Siad "Barre"] had moved over into the Ogaden, the Ethiopian side of it, and had formed an army and were being supported by Libya. Then there was an announcement from Shell Oil Company that up in the northern part of the country, just opposite Yemen, on the southern side of the Red Sea, Shell had discovered an immense basin of oil. The northern tribes who had always had problems with Mogadishu - these were from the old British Somaliland versus Italian Somaliland - decided that the guys from the south were going to steal the oil, and they were going to get nothing. Then the army that was in exile in the Ogaden invaded because all of a sudden it appeared that there was something worth having. Up until this point there just wasn't much worth fighting over in Somalia. The exile army swept as far as the city of Hargeisa and forced the Somali government forces to retreat. General Morgan, the Somali

general in the north, used artillery on the town and just blew the daylights out of it. The exiles were pushed back but the city was in ruins. Thousands of people were hiding in the desert with no food or water and many civilians died. The northern tribes resented that bloodshed, that unnecessary violence, and it progressed by several stages into a civil war. Tribalism degenerated into clanism which then progressed to war-lords and street gangs.

All this was happening right at the end of my tour. I decided to send Gail and the baby home early. I got them reservations, and the day Gail and Jeffrey went get on the plane, it arrived but it had been used to haul wounded soldiers from the north down to the Mogadishu and the seats were bloody. It was a mess. Somali soldiers started pulling Somalis off the plane and putting foreigners on the plane. Any non-Somali that might have witnessed atrocities in the north was being arrested shipped out of the country. Anybody that was related to foreign press was being stuck on the airplane. They packed it as full as they could, including standees, but somehow Gail stayed on the plane and flew to Nairobi. At the Nairobi airport everything went to hell. Refugees were arriving in Nairobi and there were showing up with no money, no passport, no reservations and no plans. Unscheduled flights were arriving from Mogadishu and many of the evacuees were injured or unable to cope with the transition in their lives. Somalia was falling apart and the Nairobi airport was overwhelmed.

The inter-tribal differences started rising up within our staff, within the embassy FSN community, to the point that I thought we were going to have a battle inside the GSO compound. I called a group meeting and basically said, “You guys have all lived together and worked together for many years. You’ve been friends, and this is the American compound, and if you come here you just have to get along with each other. Try to get along with each other as best you can.” And I think that helped a little bit. The Somali society was fractured. The Army would run patrols through the villages and neighborhoods of the city, drafting men to go fight (at gunpoint). Soldiers would go up on the main highway and stop the cars at gunpoint, chase the occupants out, and take the car. One or two real soldiers would get in and they would fill in as many "draftees" as they could. If it was a big SUV(sport utility vehicle) they could put 10 or 12 in. They would drive them to the front and tell them to go fight. These recruits had no uniforms, no training, no guns. They’d say, “Go up in there and go find someone that’s dead, take the gun and go fight.” We were losing FSN staff at the embassy. A couple of times we were able to chase down and find the guys before they were taken to fight.

There was one particular tribe that was the most at odds with the Mogadishu government. Members of that tribe were being arrested. A number of them worked for the embassy and we were able to protect them to some extent. Those men moved onto the Embassy campus and camped out. They just moved in and never went home. About this time, the marketplace fell apart. There was no food in the town; the town was starving. The FSN's leadership committee came and asked if we could figure out a way to import food in lieu of pay. We setup a food program for them. They would get their pay in Somali shillings from the embassy cashier and then they would redeposit it at the official exchange rate,10 shillings to the dollar. The street rate was 1,000 to the dollar. They would redeposit their shillings into what was called a suspense deposit account. I was using those dollars to import containers of food. So every pay period, for a couple of months, I was importing four or five containers of foodstuffs and they were taking their

pay in food. One ration of this food was 100 kilos of flour, 100 kilos of rice, 100 kilos of sugar, 10 kilos of tea, 20 liters of cooking oil, and 20 kilos of pasta. For some reason, they liked spaghetti. Those six things. That's 600, 800 pounds of food. Each FSN was getting 800 pounds of food every two weeks.

Then the question was, "How do we distribute it? How do we get it to our houses?" I was using the embassy motor pool to deliver the food to these FSN's homes because they couldn't carry 800 pounds on their backs. The FSNs were black marketing a lot of it and they were feeding whole villages with this food. This is the only time in my career where my actions saved a lot of lives. We had tribal leaders from all of the tribes represented on the FSN staff. I was able to identify these men and get them into a room and discuss issues rather than fighting over them. For the FSNs the Embassy compound was an island of relative safety and was a source of financial, emotional and dietary support for the employees and their families.

I had a Mitsubishi Montero, a lovely car, and I was getting ready to leave the country. I wanted to sell it. A Somali told me he wanted to buy it. He was a general, and he offered some fantastic sum, so I sold it to him. He came to my house with the money, and it filled three duffel bags with cash. I had so much Somali money that I could not lift it. I hauled the money down to the embassy, dragged the duffel bags to the cashier, and said, "Here's the money for the sale of my car."

They started counting the money. Some small percentage of it was unacceptable because the bills were worn out. When the cashier finished, he said, "You have too much money. You're only allowed to exchange amount that you paid for it. Here's your excess Somali shillings." I had a bushel basket of Somali shillings left. I asked "Can I buy some food, the same as the FSNs?" They thought about if for awhile and they said okay. I redeposited all those shillings and I bought food. I owned personally ten of those 800 pound rations. A week or two later, the food came in. By this point my wife and child were gone and I was living in a temporary one-bedroom apartment on the K-7 compound, and suddenly I became the owner of 8,000 pounds of food. I took one of the rations to the house that I had lived in and divided it between the lady that cleaned the house, the guards, and the relief guards. I delivered the food to all their compounds. This was just the most wonderful thing that had ever happened to them. However I still had more than 3 tons of food.

There was almost no food in the American commissary. I took it over to the commissary. "Here's all this sugar, rice, oil, flour, pasta and tea. Take it." The commissary lady said, "Well, don't you want something for it?" I said, "No, I can't make a profit, it came from the car effectively." She said, "Well we can pay you." I said, "What will you give me for it?" So they wrote me a check for some amount, I don't remember. I donated the money. Because I did that, the American community had sugar and rice and pasta available to them, because shortly after that the port closed and they couldn't import food either. That 7200 pounds of food that I turned in kept the embassy running for weeks.

Q: You left there when? In 88?

HELM: Crigler insisted that I stay at post to put on the fourth of July party for him.

Q: You're a great fourth of July "putter onner", aren't you?

HELM: Well I'm not sure that I'm great, but it is something I'm capable of doing. The problem was that there was a war on. The American ambassador's fourth of July party took hundreds, maybe even a thousand or more soldiers, and we had to close the neighborhood for three hundred yards in every direction around the house. It was a huge undertaking to put on this party. I got that done, and I got out of there. All of my household goods got out. Everybody that was moving that I was responsible for getting their stuff out, everything that was supposed to get out, got out. People that followed me weren't so lucky.

Q: So in '88, where did you go?

HELM: This is another pretty good story.

THOMAS B. KILLEEN
U.S. Refugee Coordinator
Mogadishu (1986-1988)

Thomas B. Killeen was born in Pennsylvania in 1940. He served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1960-1964 and graduated from the University of Scranton in 1964. He was a Peace Corps volunteer in Chile from 1964-1966. Mr. Killeen entered the Foreign Service in 1967. His career included positions in Vietnam, Israel, Bolivia, Nigeria, Canada, Australia, Thailand, Ghana, Venezuela, and Somalia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.

Q: *I thought we might move to one last bit. You left there in 1982 and served in Ghana for a couple of years and Caracas for a couple of years, and then you said you had something to do with the refugees in Mogadishu, from 1986 to 1988. What were you doing and how did you get involved in that?*

KILLEEN: I was the U.S. Refugee Coordinator in Mogadishu. The basic job there was rather different than the job in Bangkok. If anything it was closer to the job I did in Vietnam than the job I did in Bangkok. Basically I think it is a good idea, I don't know whether it still is the way we approach it, that the United States sometime by the mid-eighties, and perhaps even by the late seventies, as a matter of policy decided that what it would do was support the activities of the UNHCR, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in taking care of refugees around the world rather than trying to do it itself or in conjunction with allies. It would try to build up the strength and capacity and flexibility and utility of the UNHCR to deal with refugee situations wherever they might arise. By the time I came back into it in 1986, in a very real sense what my job in Somalia was was to check and make sure that the UNHCR there was doing what it said it was doing and that it was not UN officials or employees who had the gold bathtubs in their

houses, and it was not the UN officials and their employees who were vacationing on the south coast of France, defrauding the public of the refugee benefits; that the refugee benefits were in fact getting to the refugees. I had a semi-simultaneous watching brief on the host country government to make sure they were not looting and pillaging.

Q: *Who were the refugees?*

KILLEEN: People who departed from Ethiopia and came to Somalia during and as a result of the second Ogaden war.

Q: *This being the area between Ethiopia and Somalia, an arid area?*

KILLEEN: Yes. I am being hesitant about that; Ethiopia claims the territory as theirs, the U.S. supports that claim. Somalia claims the territory as theirs and has received no support from any place else, but has accorded to the people there, citizenship. The first decision and maybe the only decision of the Organization of African Unity when it got organized thirty years ago, was that the colonial boundaries would remain in force until things got sorted out. Nobody has tried to sort things out. That is a colonial boundary. Those people came into Somalia as a result and aftermath of the Ogaden war.

Q: *How well did the High Commissioner's people do, did you feel?*

KILLEEN: I think they did a lousy job with a couple of exceptions. As for the exceptions I think they did heroic work, did outstanding work for which they don't get any credit, and they should get credit. First of all, they kept as many as eight hundred and fifty thousand people, maybe a million people, alive; they kept them largely unexploited; they got them a lot better educated than they had been at home and that they ever had any reason to expect. What they didn't do was to either get them repatriated to their place of origin, which was impossible, or to get them integrated into the general Somali society, which would have been very difficult.

Q: *It being a tribal society and these people were not affiliated?*

KILLEEN: Worse, much worse than that. It being a tribal society and the people were part of the tribe; but they were a part of the tribe that had its own culture and ethics and turf and they were not on it. My driver in Somalia -- it was hilarious, like a conversation out of the "Godfather" -- tells me that my housekeeper is getting married. I said, "That's nice, who is she marrying?" "Some fellow, and he is very religious." The Somalis are Muslims, and they are quite observant. "He's very religious, a very religious man." I picked up on what he wasn't saying and said "Where is he from?" And he told me he was one of these Ogadeni people, but they met at church -- as if it were some Italian kid marrying a Polish girl. This woman, who was from the same clan as my driver, was marrying into the Ogadeni clan! It wasn't so bad because he was very religious and they had met at church.

Q: *Maybe the UN was up against something that they couldn't crack?*

KILLEEN: Maybe they were.

Q: *Did you have any control over things? What did you do?*

KILLEEN: I reported and that was another area in which my manner of working was similar to the way that I worked in Vietnam. I reported as I saw things, I made recommendations as I saw things should be. I reported to the Refugee Bureau in Washington, copy to the Refugee and Migration Officer at the U.S. Mission to the UN in Geneva, who could and would drop things on appropriate people's desks in the headquarters of the UNHCR in Geneva. I reported to the Refugee Bureau in Washington which, as a Board Member of the UNHCR could and would demand certain actions of the UNHCR, and if it was a matter of something like waste, fraud or real mismanagement, was in a perfectly sound position to make such demands. In that sense I had influence on what they were doing and how they were doing it. We weren't supposed to be adversaries, we were supposed to be in a collegial relationship; we were all trying to accomplish the same goals. I very much felt that part of the UNHCR's problem was an over-willingness to kowtow to the actual or perceived wishes of the U.S. in a particular matter. If I saw a particular approach or solution, I didn't mind if they disagreed with me. My judgment was that they did a lousy job in affecting the local resettlement of these individuals. I saw no other possibility, and I saw no reason whatsoever after ten years to dillydally around any longer. Get on with the business of trying to make it as attractive as possible to Somalia, to make these people an integral part of the society.

Q: *How about your relations with our Embassy there?*

KILLEEN: I was part of the Embassy; I had offices in the Embassy; my efficiency report was written by the DCM. I had my own budget and that allowed me considerably greater latitude than anybody. I had my own vehicles; if I didn't like the office space I was perfectly free to leave; I could have rented space elsewhere. If I didn't want to use the Embassy communications I could have used others; I could have used the postal telegraph system to send my reports to Washington via commercial cable; I could have used the existing telex system. I didn't have to deal with the Embassy, but of course I was a foreign service officer and of course I felt an obligation to be part of the mission. It was also, in dealing with the UNHCR and the Somali government, one more arrow in my quiver just to be able to say, "The Ambassador isn't going to like this when I tell him," or that he will like this when I tell him. Of course I didn't always tell him, that goes without saying. I found the Ambassador very responsive.

Q: *Who was the Ambassador?*

KILLEEN: Frank Crigler. Very responsive when I asked him for certain kinds of help; maybe I could have asked for more -- maybe if I had asked for more he would not have been as responsive. I always thought I got a full and fair hearing on anything I wanted to advance about U.S. relations with Somalia, with the region. Obviously my pulpit was the refugee situation.

Q: *Did you have much dealing with the Somali authorities themselves? How did you find them?*

KILLEEN: Yes. Bright, smart, very adept at dealing with a hostile environment and all environments are hostile. Very nationalistic, very self-assured when they were on grounds with which they were familiar, when they had reason to be self-assured, and when they were not, very free to ask for help, aid, assistance, advise. They were a very interesting people. You probably have buried in your memory that during the Vietnam War some of the vessels that carried goods into Hanoi flew Somali flags. The governing structure of Somalia from about 1969 forward was avowedly, publicly, Marxist, and the country was, in the words of a pretty senior Somali official to me across his desk, "Somalia was in the other camp." Things changed, among the things that changed was that they saw that Marxism just didn't work. Africans are practical people. They felt themselves to be stabbed in the back by the Russians during the Ogaden war; every Somali knew the story, at best apocryphal, that what changed the president of the country's mind about dealing with the Russians was when they found an Ethiopian soldier dead on the battlefield and opened up his pack to find a can of Somali tuna which had been sent to the Soviet Union and the Soviets had turned right around and given it to the Ethiopians as field rations. And every Somali had noticed that during the ten years that the Soviets were there -- just how accurate this number is I don't know -- they had twenty-five thousand troops in Somalia, most of them were young men, and there wasn't a Russian baby to be seen in the country. The Somalis saw that the Russians kept their troops sequestered, kept them moving around in bunches and put it down to simple racism, and it probably was a fair amount of that. It didn't bother than at all when the government decided to leave that camp.

Q: *Within two years of your leaving in 1988, the place blew apart. It is still going on today, probably one of world's nastiest civil wars. What was the situation around the time you left?*

KILLEEN: A fellow by the name of Mohammed Siad Barré came to power by coup in 1969 in Somalia, displacing a semi-democratic parliamentary government; it wasn't too successful a government. That government proceeded to spend the next twenty years with its eyes firmly focused on two goals: One, maintenance of itself in power, and two, prevention of tribal, inter-clan, conflict within Somalia. Maybe even the second was nothing more than one of the latter ways to the first. The effect, in any event, was that twenty or more years of inter-clan stress did not get sorted out in a timely fashion in the ways that those kind of stresses can be and have been sorted out in tribal societies. In May of 1988 some of the outs of an "in" clan marched into a town in the north called Hargeysa; they were aided and assisted by members of other "in" clans and some "out" clans. They marched into Hargeysa and they took it and the government responded with armed force, by planes, by artillery, knocking the bejesus out of this town Hargeysa and driving out the attackers. The attackers were somewhat nationalistic in respect to the northern part of Somalia and they were somewhat idealistic in respect to the proper role of government and they wanted greater and greater participation of individuals both in political and economic life. They didn't want the same old men continuing to run affairs in Somalia who had been running them for twenty years. They wanted some change, some movement. What that did, and it was pretty much suppressed by the time I left Somalia, though it was still flaring, was to show the government had feet of clay, that the government was no where near as strong as it had appeared to be. Other clans, the outs from other clans then took up the cudgels. Today, from everything that I have read -- and I have read pretty thoroughly what's available in the New York Times, the Philadelphia Inquirer, and the Washington Post, but there is not much coverage of

these things -- whatever had started when I was there is over and is a settled question; it is now a self-asserted Republic of Northern Somalia, or Somaliland. The problem is not there, not Hargeysa, not Berbera, not the northern half of Somalia; it is the southern half of Somalia where group A is fighting group B; people from the larger clan affiliations. One larger clan is scrapping against another larger clan with the former Siad Barré group, which is only roughly connected with some of clan B, being off in the wilderness, in effect licking its wounds.

The Somalis have a lot of experience with foreigners. Over the years they have sent a lot of people abroad for studies. A lot of Somalis live outside of Somalia; something like a third of the population of northern Kenya is Somali; there are numbers of these people that live in what the rest of the world considers to be Ethiopia; Somalis operate as truck drivers all up and down the east coast of Africa, they drive over-the-road trucks. They have a lot of sophistication -- maybe forty percent of the hookers in Nairobi are Somalis. There is even a Somali woman who works in American motion pictures.

Q: *We have a fairly substantial Somali group here. Many are working as waitresses and sales clerks in some of the better places. They have worked their way up, they are obviously a cut above the normal refugee.*

KILLEEN: Exactly. They have information, they have dealt with foreigners. There was a story about somebody who had made a one day visit to Somalia and had exited making pronouncements; the pronouncements were absurd. Someone else had entered Somalia and he was "laughed at, scorned by the Somalis", that was the story in one of the papers. There are a zillion little ports up and down the coast of Somalia that have been ports since the time of the Portuguese, since the time of Mohammed; to talk about an inability to deliver foodstuffs to Somalia, which a U.S. official did -- some guy from the Foreign Disaster and Assistance Office went over there and spent a day and when he exited said we can't deliver foodstuffs to Somalia because the airports can't be secured. As far as the Somalis are concerned that is merely a lack of will and they are fairly quick to ascribe to a lack of will claims that something can't be done. Often I would agree with them that it is a lack of will and nothing more than a lack of will. The business of foodstuff, quite literally there are scores of little ports, just send little boats and kick the stuff onto the shore, the people will come. It is horrifying what is going on there today. What is equally horrifying, to me, is the seemingly incompetent response of the world. We can't deal with this stuff.

JAMES K. BISHOP, JR
Ambassador
Somalia (1990)

Born in New Rochelle, New York on July 21, 1938 to an Irish family, Ambassador James Bishop, Jr. graduated from Holy Cross College in 1960. His studies concentrated on American history and to some extent, Russian and diplomatic history as well. His career led him to several interesting posts including Ghana,

Togo, Liberia, Cameroon, Beirut, and New Zealand. On November 15, 1995, he was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy

BISHOP: I mentioned earlier that my next assignment was to be the US Ambassador to Somalia. This assignment had been discussed with me a year earlier by Ed Perkins, the Director General, and Hank Cohen. At the time, there were only two posts in Africa which seemed to have much challenge: Zaire and Somalia. The Bishops had had enough of the rain forest and thought that it would be interesting to be posted in the north-eastern part of Africa with its unique culture. That is how we ended up in Mogadishu. The country was gripped by civil war; there were three separate armies fighting. We arrived September 6, 1990.

I had known that Siad Barre, the President of Somalia, was viewed as an authoritarian, undemocratic, sometime brutal military dictator, whose support we continued to seek for reasons that I will discuss later. By September, "Operation Desert Shield" was underway and it looked likely that we would have armed conflict on the Arabian Peninsula, requiring us to maintain our base rights in Somalia. I was instructed to do everything in my power to seek continued Somali military cooperation. It is interesting to note that the US interests in Somalia had shifted, during the period that I had no connection with it, from a "Cold War" asset to a base for our campaign against the Iraqis. A month before my arrival in Somalia, Saddam Hussein had invaded Kuwait and was threatening our oil interests in the Gulf.

On August 1, I was flown down to General Schwarzkopf's CENTCOM headquarters. There the General, quite surprisingly, spent most of the day with me. We took a command briefing together. Then we had lunch and afterward I pursued my special interest: the E&E plan to make sure it was up to date and that people had focused on how they might evacuate us from Mogadishu. I thought that the odds were better than even that we would have to leave Mogadishu under less than favorable circumstances. I had enough experience in Liberia, in Washington, and earlier in Beirut to realize how important it was to be prepared for emergencies and evacuations. I was delighted to find that the CENTCOM intelligence chief--Brigadier General Pat Leidy--was an old friend with whom I had worked and traveled when I was Deputy Assistant Secretary and he was the Military Assistant to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense handling Africa. I spent a couple of hours with a couple of Lieutenant Colonels, who were the E&E experts. I reviewed the plans, the photography, etc. and satisfied myself that CENTCOM realized that it might have to conduct an evacuation from Mogadishu and was prepared to do that. I came away with a feeling that CENTCOM took the E&E possibility seriously.

Our interests in Somali were quite substantial. After the Carter administration woke up to the fact that the Soviets were indeed quite nasty and that the Iranians were no friends of the US, it devised the rapid deployment strategy to contain Soviet expansionism and Iranian militancy. This rapid reaction strategy was to provide us the capability to surge military forces into the Arabian Peninsula and south-west Asia in the event of a push by either the Soviets or the Iranians toward the oil fields. Somalia became of interest to us because Saudi Arabia was not willing to have American forces stationed on its territory; it wasn't even clear that the Saudis would allow our forces to be on their soil in time of war. Therefore we needed to have airfields and ports as close to the Peninsula as possible from which we could supply and thrust forces in the event of a

conflict.

The Carter administration sent Dick Moose, the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, and others to Somalia in the late 1970s. They were to negotiate a military access agreement. A similar agreement was signed with the Kenyans. I had been part of the effort to get military access and storage rights in the Sudan in the eighties. The Somalis, having embarked on an ill-fated invasion of Ethiopia after the Emperor's overthrow in 1974, had suffered severe losses when the Soviets, who had been their patron's, changed sides and became Ethiopia's patron. The Soviets sent a Cuban expeditionary force as their surrogates to assist the Ethiopians. That force together with substantial military assistance and advice from the Soviets pretty much destroyed the Somali armored and infantry force which had invaded the Ogaden--a portion of Ethiopia populated primarily by Somali tribes.

All of this history forced the Somalis to look for a new patron; we were looking for access rights. The two objectives coincided in 1979 when we and the Somalis signed an agreement which gave us access to the old Soviet airfield and port at Berbera in north-west Somalia. We also obtained military access rights to the airfield and port in Mogadishu. In return, we mounted a program of substantial military assistance which was designed to assure our access rights without encouraging the Somalis to undertake a renewed campaign in the Ogaden, which they surely would have lost again and would have again destabilized the region. Our interest were primarily to maintain our access to the military facilities without providing the Somalis with military equipment which they might use offensively against the Ethiopians. Furthermore, since the country was in a state of civil war, we wanted to exclude from our assistance program, any military equipment that might be used for a renewal of massacres such as had taken place at Hargeysa and elsewhere in the north several years earlier. As I mentioned earlier, Somali exiles who had been driven out of Ethiopia had taken Hargeysa, and President Siad Barre had bombed them out of it--both by air and by artillery--with a loss of over 10,000 civilian lives.

A second role for us was to try to facilitate a peace process in Somalia by reconciling Siad to his domestic opponents. Our role was to encourage a greater degree of representative government in Mogadishu and to lessen the strictures on domestic political life, so that the regime's opponents would have a non-violent alternative to civil war to accommodate their political aspiration. Siad Barre's human rights record was abysmal.

We conducted a substantial assistance program in Somalia including both large refugee and economic development activities, although the latter was diminishing as the civil war made most of the country inhospitable to assistance workers.

The Embassy in Mogadishu consisted of about 150 Americans. We had a substantial number of AID employees, both direct hire and contract. They were implementing a public health project and building a facility for the killing of cattle to be shipped to Saudi Arabia--one of Somalia's principal exports. Then we had a military assistance team of about thirteen people--including some Filipino contractors. It provided the Somalis with communication equipment as well as spare parts for radars which had been given to the Somalis in earlier years. These had never been connected to any ground defense system, so if the radars indicated an attack, the Somalis didn't

really have an effective response mechanism. We had one USIA officer, a small intelligence unit and one political officer. It was an Embassy which was very modestly staffed by State Department for a country the size of Somalia.

The old Chancery had been one of the most run down buildings in the Department's inventory. About six months before my arrival in an action which was to become very significant later, the Chancery was moved to a building on a 180-acre compound that the US government had owned for decades that had been used only for recreation when the Soviets held sway in Somalia in the mid-1960s and 1970s. The new Marine House, Chancery, and administrative offices were occupied when we arrived, and we moved into the Residence as its first occupants. I was distressed to notice that it was a building largely constructed in glass, with no protective barriers in a city afflicted by considerable violence even in 1990. The Residence was so tall that its top story looked over the compound walls and therefore was a clear target for anyone outside those walls. One of the first things I did was to order that some bars be placed across the glass so that we could have a little more protection. There was a school on the compound. Half of the compound consisted of a golf course and a swimming pool--which were the recreational centers for the American community.

As I have mentioned, in north Somalia, civil war was ongoing, pitting members of the Issac tribe against Siad Barre's government. There was another army about 100 miles to the west of Mogadishu, composed largely of the Haweye clan. There was another smaller force in the south. But none of these forces was able to hold any city; Barre's forces were able to prevent that, but they were confronted and harassed at times by these various clan forces. In general, the military tide was turning against the government; the various rebels were gaining ground and were more active militarily. They were also more influential in an ever increasing part of the country. But the regime was not in desperate straits since it still held all of the administrative centers in the country,

We also had to confront urban terrorism. The day we arrived, three bombs went off in downtown Mogadishu. Also there were a couple of people killed, government buildings were being attacked. In addition to political violence, the country was also experiencing criminal violence. The distinction between the two was often non-existent, since the criminals often wore uniforms. I brought both my wife and a daughter with me. I think the ten-year-old child didn't fully comprehend what situation she would be facing; she had had a good time in Liberia despite the conflict there--she didn't realize until the end that the disgruntled guards had threatened to kill her. My wife was a good soldier and went with me.

The government's troops were drawn from all of the tribes in the country, although increasingly the leadership positions were occupied by members of Siad Barre's tribe. The soldiers closest to him came from his own clan. This preferential treatment was part of the problem. Senior officers, who were members of other tribes, were retired and replaced by members of Siad's tribe--and in some cases, even his own kinsmen. The government troops were using still a lot of weapons left over from the "Soviet" period. As I said, what we supplied was equipment with which we tried to win Somali favor without providing an offensive military capability--such as radars which were useful to watch Ethiopian planes across the border--and communications equipment. In the early

1980s, we had provided some rifles and some jeep-mounted recoilless rifles after the Ethiopians crossed the border and occupied a couple of towns.

Bob Oakley and I had a couple of arguments--which I lost--about military supplies. This was during the time Oakley was ambassador and I was a deputy assistant secretary in the AF Bureau. The Italians wanted to provide the Somalis with a M-47 tanks--which we had given to them in the 1950s and were pretty worthless. I accepted the fact that they were probably of little use for military purposes, but they did represent a high visibility political gesture. I therefore opposed the grant; Oakley favored it. We subsequently found out that the Italians were planning to re-engine the tanks, making them a military weapon at a very high cost. That made it apparent that some corruption was probably at work in Italy. Then Oakley and I had another debate; ultimately it was agreed that two re-engined tanks could be transferred to Somalia, but that was the limit. We were under considerable pressure from the Italians and other NATO allies to allow the transfer of the tanks. Oakley had also persuaded Crocker, over my objections, to give the Somalis some howitzers that Siad Barre could tow down main street. That would give his military some visible signs of his American connections to offset the criticism he was receiving from his military about the paucity of our support while we were having essentially free rein at the Berbera and Mogadishu facilities.

Within ten days of our arrival, we decided to go to the beach. We asked which beach would be safe from the urban violence. One was identified and we went with another couple. We couldn't really go into the water because of the sharks. At one moment, my daughter and I heard a shot; when we looked back to the beach house where my wife and another woman were sitting on the porch, she saw the two ladies being confronted by three or four Somalis--one of whom had just fired his weapon into the wall--twelve inches from my wife's head from six feet away. She kicked her beach bag to him; he took out a knife and waved it across her face without hitting her and grabbed the bag. The Somalis then jumped the wall and ran up the hill with our driver in chase. It was obviously a very upsetting incident for me and the family and a considerable and justifiable embarrassment to the Somali government. When the time came for me to present my credentials a couple of weeks later, I decided that I would demand more Somali police protection. Siad Barre first apologized for what had happened to my wife and then he promised to provide police protection for the compound, which we did get.

I had earlier called on the Foreign Minister. Our military access agreement was up for renewal. We were waiting for the Somalis to come to us to request the opening of negotiations; we fully expected them to come fully ready with an exorbitant list of demands. But the subject was not raised during the first meeting; what was raised was a Somali request for additional military equipment and supplies and civil assistance. That was accompanied by a statement of full Somali support for us in the Gulf at a time when we knew that Saddam Hussein was sending envoys to Mogadishu to try to entice the Somalis to join the Iraqis in their struggle against us. We were not sure how successful these envoys were being.

With Barre, in addition to the question of Embassy protection, I emphasized our hope that Somalia would stand fast with us in our opposition to Hussein and our desire to be helpful in reconciling Siad Barre with his domestic opponents. Siad Barre could see our build up in the

Gulf. There could not have been any question in his mind that we were acting in earnest. But the Iraqis were still trying to win the Somalis over to their side. We knew, from various sources, that there probably was money being spent by the Iraqis, which had the potential of having a serious impact on attitudes in Somalia at the time. There was a long standing estrangement between the Somalis and the Saudis, who made no secret of their disdain for the Somalis; in fact they had cut off meat imports a couple of years earlier on the grounds that there was hoof-and-mouth disease in Somalia.

The Iranians, who were the nominal enemies of the Iraqis, certainly did not want to see more American troops in their region. So they also lobbied the Somalis. On the other hand, the fact that we were moving military forces into the area made our access rights more valuable in Somali eyes; they certainly thought that the price of such access could be raised. In fact, we were not using Somali bases much; we had prepositioned petroleum supplies at Berbera and at Mogadishu's port for naval bunkering. We had expanded the airport in Mogadishu, which we used periodically for naval surveillance purposes by P-3s--Orions--directed against the Soviets rather than any of the Gulf states. Occasionally we sent transport aircraft through Mogadishu on their way to the Gulf. We had some contractors in Berbera who kept the swimming pools filled in addition to handling the naval bunkering.

I was pretty disappointed with the access that my staff had to Somali sources. It also turned out that my predecessor, who had left almost a year earlier, may have been lazy, if not incompetent. His attitudes had infected the Embassy. I remember the first time the DCM and I had luncheon with some political types. Three days later I was still looking for the MEMCOM; four days later, I had to instruct him to have it to me by the next day. I came to the Embassy one day to find the girl-friend of one of the Marines with him at his post, behind the protective glass. The Embassy had become indolent. Somehow, in moving from downtown to the new Chancery, the Political Section's files had been lost or destroyed. We had been in Somalia for thirty years and had no biographic files.

We had a political officer who arrived at the same time I did; he was first rate. His predecessor, who was a dud, had gone back to Washington. I had known him there; so I was not entirely surprised by what I found in the Political Section of the Embassy.

The senior military officer was the Security Assistance officer; he had come with me from Monrovia. The Defense Attaché, who also was an Army officer, was first rate.

The USIS officer, who was married to the political officer, arrived in Mogadishu at the same time I did. She also was very good. The AID Mission Director--Mike Rugh--had been the deputy in the Monrovia AID organization and therefore was an officer I knew well; he also did a good job. The CIA seemed to have some pretty good assets; there were a couple of good officers among the CIA contingent. We had a pretty good feel for what was going on outside of Mogadishu in the civil war.

The issue of the bases arose around November, but it was never formally pursued because of other more pressing factors. The security situation in and around Mogadishu became so perilous

that it took our full attention. We had an Embassy aircraft, but it stopped functioning about three weeks after my arrival. I could not use it until I had formally presented my credentials. By the time that occurred, the aircraft was disabled and had to be flown out of the country for a major overhaul. So I never really had a chance to see the country-side. I did manage twice to visit an AID project which was located about 40 miles outside of Mogadishu. I also had the opportunity to visit a refugee camp which was about 70 miles south of the capital. Those were the only trips outside of Mogadishu that I was able to undertake during my aborted tour.

The Libyans were also a player in Somalia. As I said, I took a couple of trips to an AID project--a livestock facility. When I went for the opening of the project, I startled the diplomatic community by embracing the Libyan Ambassador. He had been the Libyan Ambassador in Niger when I served there; he and I had played soccer together on the diplomatic team. We had had a reasonably good relationship in Niger, where it was to our advantage to maintain it because Libya and Niger abutted each other. My ability to maintain a decent relationship with the Libyan Ambassador provided the other American officers in the Embassy opportunities to get closer to the Libyan staff in Niger than might otherwise been possible. The Libyans were active in Somalia but that first embrace was the extent of our contacts with them for the rest of my time in Mogadishu. They began to deliver arms to Siad Barre, whose position became an increasingly tenuous one.

As I said, one of my main goals was to keep the Somali government on our side in the Gulf. I spent a lot of time dealing with the physical protection of the American community and property, including the stiffening of our defense parameters. I had gates cut into the wall so we could get the school kids into the compound in a hurry if needed. We prepositioned equipment in the Chancery and to the extent possible, below ground. But we had only one basement, so that we had limited underground safe haven capacity. We conducted drills with increasing sophistication--e.g., mass casualty drills--so that the staff would be familiar with what it might have to do *in extremis*. I had staff become accustomed to working with Marines in battle gear to lessen the shock if wearing such gear became necessary. We did what we could to stiffen the compound's defenses, but our opportunities were limited because the Department, for some insane reason, at a cost of over a million dollars, had built ten foot high walls which were 15 inches thick, but had openings every twenty yards through which weapons could be fired into the compound.

I worked quite closely with the Italian Ambassador, Mario Sicca--a SAIS graduate. His role in Somalia was somewhat analogous to what my role had been in Liberia in that he was the most influential of the foreign envoys since he represented the former colonial government. Of course we didn't have quite the same relationship with the Liberians, but the situations were analogous. I worked with Sicca to try to convince the Somalis to attend an international conference in Cairo with representatives of the armed opposition groups. This conference was being sponsored by the Italians and the Egyptians. I worked directly with the unarmed opposition to try to convince it to talk to the government. I tried to get the government to take steps which would encourage the opposition to believe that the government was sincere in its efforts to reconcile with its domestic opponents. I invited for lunch Ali Madeh, who is now the chief of the clan forces in north Mogadishu and beyond, a recently released political prisoner, who is now in charge of

north-eastern Somalia, and a number of other Somali politicians who are now prominent in their country.

I also spent considerable time talking to some of my diplomatic colleagues about contingency planning for violence in Mogadishu which might require an evacuation. I asked the French, the Italians, the British and the Soviets what their evacuation plans were; I fed that information back to Washington with a request that it begin consultations in Paris, Rome, London and Moscow to try to develop coordination in evacuation planning. These were governments that had evacuation capabilities which in some cases were being enhanced by the deployment of American, French and British forces to the Gulf. We had considerable intelligence about terrorists plots directed against me personally and against our facilities. Some of the intelligence was quite detailed. The alleged instigators of these efforts were the Iranians, the Iraqis, and the Libyans and their Somali surrogates.

We were visited by a DELTA force delegation. DELTA is an elite Army force stationed at Ft. Bragg, whose missions include hostage rescues and protection of embassies from terrorist assaults. They measured and photographed everything that might be useful to them in an emergency.

We had open lines of communications to the rebels. We had sent word to them that they should cease any further attacks on public buildings in Mogadishu with the argument that a government that took power by terrorism would not have the approval of the US government. After we delivered that message, there was an end to the politically motivated terrorist attacks. But criminal violence spread rapidly and became almost general. For example, one night in November 1990, there were nine people killed after having been abducted from their four-wheel drive vehicles. Bank robberies as well as robberies of offices were frequent. One of our Marines had been shot in August, just prior to my arrival, in a robbery in one of the bazaars in downtown Mogadishu. We had to warn Americans against going downtown, except for the most urgent reasons such as conducting official business with the ministries which were all located downtown. We arranged with the Catholic priest in charge of the Cathedral to come to our house to conduct mass for the international community to eliminate travel downtown for religious services. His bishop had been murdered several months earlier. That arrangement unfortunately broke down when the priest who was in permanent charge returned to Mogadishu and decided that he didn't want his flock divided between the Italians who were still willing to come for mass downtown--where their Chancery was located--and the Americans who by this time had been joined by the Ugandans, the Kenyans, the Romanians, etc--twenty different nationalities. We had an interesting confrontation with the priest on the back porch of our house. One of our school teachers, who had been a Marine and a Catholic seminarian, helped us to try to convince the priest that he should overlook his sensitivities to a divided flock and worry more about the needs of his parishioners.

The security situation was becoming increasingly dangerous, making the conduct of our assistance programs increasingly impossible. By early December, I was coming to the conclusion that it was time to reduce our potential casualty list by reducing our staffing in Somalia. There were several episodes during which bandits violated diplomatic immunity be stealing UN

vehicles from UN compounds. They also had broken into the compounds of some of the non-governmental assistance agencies still working in Somalia. So about December 13, I recommended to Washington that we conduct a voluntary departure. Banditry was just getting out of hand; I was not that concerned about the civil war, which was being fought 100 miles away from Mogadishu. Washington readily went along; so by the nineteenth we reduced our staffing from about 150 to 47. The latter were deemed essential. All dependents departed; I did not order anyone to leave but I did talk to every staff member who had children to encourage them to take their children out. We then closed the school. The UN had evacuated its dependents and was in the process of evacuating its non-essential personnel as were other foreign delegations. My wife and child left on the first plane, partly as an example to others who were reluctant to let their dependents go.

I should define that "voluntary departure" as used in the Department of State meant that the US government would pay for the transportation of the employee or his dependents back to the US. Under those circumstances, no one is ordered to leave the country; involuntary evacuations are mandated, as was the case later in Somalia.

Before the deadline for voluntary departure had expired, we moved into a mandated departure mode. The violence was escalating. I had instructed the staff that it was not to be more than 2 kilometers from the Embassy's flag pole; the only people who went to the city for business had bodyguards and armored cars. That group included some of the military officers and myself. We were the only foreign power who could still conduct business in the chaos on Mogadishu, but it was very limited. That led me to recommend an "ordered departure" program which was readily approved. That meant every non-employee dependent had to leave and every one that I deemed as "non-essential" had to leave. That brought the staff down to 37 American employees.

The main reason we needed to maintain at least a skeleton staff was because of the Gulf War. We had about 500,000 troops moving into Saudi Arabia, which required that we keep the Somalis on our side so that their bases could be used if necessary. As we moved into December, it became evident that we were not going to need all of the Somali facilities to which we had access. The Navy sent a tanker to pick up all of the petroleum supplies that had been prepositioned at Berbera. The Air Force became so anxious about security in Mogadishu that it refused to have any of its planes remain at the airport overnight; that suggested that it was not a proper facility for the upcoming "Desert Storm" operation. But there continued to be the possibility that some of the facilities in Somalia might be required and therefore a US representation was necessary to maintain some contact with the government.

We also needed to keep a minimal staff to assist with a final withdrawal if and when that became necessary. We still had substantial real estate holdings in Somalia, which we didn't want to turnover to looters.

At the root of the banditry was the collapse of the central government's resource base. Soldiers were not being paid--they were paying themselves by robbing. Efforts for political reconciliation had aborted. The principal rebel groups had refused to attend the Cairo meeting; even Barre said that he would not go, but would sent a lower level official. So Cairo never got off the ground.

The political situation steadily deteriorated; no sooner had a new constitution been approved than the government violated it by arresting opposition leaders without due process. It was clear that a new political process was not going to make it in Somalia. The military situation in the countryside was deteriorating for the government, even though, as I said, the actual fighting was still 100 miles away. In mid-December, the government ordered a column of troops out to engage Aidid's rebel force. That force disappeared into the bush, only to reappear later to punish the government forces rather severely as they were returning to Mogadishu. That brought the fighting to about 40 miles from the capital.

We had communications with the rebels. We received assurance from them that they had trained 1000 men to protect foreign embassies and other vital installations; which was one more reason why we stayed. The rebels maintained that they were not interested in seeing the cities and towns destroyed. The Haweye clan which was in the forefront of rebellion activity in fact obtained its main support from its members who were the merchants in Mogadishu; so it had a material interest in the preservation of the city and in maintaining decent relations with foreign representatives. Knowing that gave us some confidence in the assurances that the rebels had provided.

I should note that I had seen Siad Barre only once when I presented my credentials. I had seen his ministers often, including those in charge of defense, foreign affairs and internal security. When I decided it was time for me to the see the President--to get his viewpoint on the situation--I asked for an appointment. This was early December. Finally I saw him shortly after Christmas. I met with him alone. He expressed himself as resigned--this was after his troops had failed to find Aidid and had suffered severe loses when he found them instead. Barre said that he would continue the fight, but that the outcome was in the hands of Allah. Barre had never been known as a religious man. He wanted to know what I thought he should do--that had been a common theme of my dialogue with the ministers in the previous days. In response, I urged negotiations in lieu of continued reliance on military confrontation.

I cabled Washington my analysis which was that the Barre regime was in desperate straights; it was essentially bankrupt, both financially and intellectually. On December 30 the government decided to deal with the violence by sending troops into the neighborhoods of Mogadishu from whence much of the violence was erupting. The government hoped to confiscate weapons; the people instead took out their weapons and started shooting at the soldiers. On the 31st, I restricted everyone to the Embassy compound and to an apartment building that was directly across the street. We watched from the roof the tracer fire of government forces. I alerted Washington that it should consider planning for an evacuation; I thought we might have to leave *in extremis*. That was a precaution on my part because I still thought that the government, with the means at its disposal, could still suppress the urban insurrection or banditry, which to us seemed to be random and uncoordinated, both among the urban groups and with the rebel forces outside of Mogadishu.

By the next day, the fighting had grown more serious. There were overflights by ground attack aircraft, being used for observation purposes, but aircraft which could be used for bombing--having razed Hargeysa two years earlier. Armored weaponry was being used. The

heavy artillery--"Bob Oakley's" howitzers--were raining shells on neighborhoods which were the center of the violence. Some of these were very close to the Presidential Palace, which also came under fire and from which mortars and artillery rounds were being launched. The British Ambassador and the German Charge' were trapped by the violence in their residences which were opposite the Presidential Palace and were therefore able to give us a pretty good accounting of events. Some of our local employees were reporting on what was going on. Some Somali military officers were coming by David Staley's compound, which was a 1/4 mile away from the main compound. He was asked to stay in his compound together with some other military officers; we provided them with a back up radio in case we lost our radio at the Chancery so that we could continue to communicate with Washington. The Kenyan Ambassador and his staff eventually became guests in Staley's compound. Somalis had attacked the Kenyan residence, had stripped the Ambassador's wife and taken everything that could be moved.

At the end of the year artillery and aircraft were being used, the rebel army was moving towards Mogadishu, and the government was likely, if it evacuated Mogadishu, to leave via the road which ran outside our compound placing us in the line of fire from the government forces as they retreated as well as rebel forces that might be pursuing their enemy. The situation presented a strong argument for leaving Somalia as soon as possible.

On January 2, 1991, when it was clear that we couldn't reach the airport because of the violence even though Somali Airlines had one flight per day, I talked to the Italians. They were discussing the possibility of sending military aircraft to evacuate their citizens; they offered to take us along if Washington approved. However, my recommendation to Washington was that we manage our own evacuation. That was agreed to. C-130s were sent to Mombasa to be available to fly us out--if we could reach the airport. The Navy also despatched two ships--the "Guam"--a helicopter carrier--and the "Trenton--an escort ship with helicopters and additional Marines. When those ships reached Mogadishu, they would be able to airlift us out of the compound--if we couldn't reach the airport.

By this time, stray shells were falling into the compound. The Defense Attaché had been authorized the night before to go to a function at the Italian Embassy. He took a couple of rounds when a Somali fired an AK-47 at his vehicle; a couple of the shells traveled between sheets of armored plate surrounding the car and cut across the car an inch from his backbone. The car was put on display in the compound when he returned. New Year's Eve night, Lt. Colonel Youngman, who was the deputy in the Security Assistance mission, while driving back to Staley's compound from the Embassy, was confronted by a nervous soldier; he fired a AK-47 burst into the front of the car, deflating the tires. Youngman made it back to the compound on the rims. Fortunately, he was not hurt either.

Obviously, the situation was deteriorating by the minute. Non-Americans were beginning to come into the compound looking for protection; some diplomats sought refuge. I mentioned the Kenyans earlier; the Nigerian Ambassador was sleeping on a couch outside of my room. We had all the junior staff of the British embassy. There were a number of NGO representatives, private business people, as well as some of our local employees and their families. We were housing and feeding a substantial number of people. We had organized ourselves to do this by putting some of

the staff in unconventional roles. The head of the Joint Administrative Office seemed to be more interested in acting as a spotter than administrative tasks. We could only move across the street when it was clear of armed elements; if there were armed elements, one could expect an exchange of fire because by this time the violence had crept into the neighborhoods surrounding the compound. Several military posts had been set up near us which fired away at opponents nearby. The JAO Director became the spotter on the roof top and there kept track of the violence around us. He was responsible for signaling the all clear to open the main gate and permit additional folks to take refuge. When there were people with guns around, we kept the gate closed as some wanted to force their way into the compound.

The AID Mission Director was put in charge of logistics--housing and feeding. Some of the caddies who had worked on the golf course and had been a very unruly and sometimes violent group, joined by others, appeared on the golf course side of the compound and started molesting local employees who had taken refuge there. I sent Bob Noble, who was a Scottish mercenary and the head of our local security force, out to deal with that caddy gang. He took with him the acting Regional Security Officer--a young woman. She had been the deputy security officer in Abidjan and was sent to assist us. They went accompanied by some of Noble's unarmed guards. When the caddies acted in a bellicose fashion, Noble fired some warning rounds; that brought some directed fire on him and his group. Our group then directed fire at the Somali gang, which departed. Noble then went across the street to where a Somali government detachment had established itself. With characteristics foresight, Noble had established a relationship with them. So when asked, the commander was glad to assist Noble to clear the golf course part of the compound of the caddies and others who were obviously intent on looting. Of course, it wasn't at all clear how long the detachment would remain near our compound. We did have six Marine Guards, but their role was restricted to protecting the Chancery; they could not be placed on the outer perimeter, which was quite extensive.

On the same day, we had to evacuate the apartment building across the street whose roof was serving as our look-out point. Some Somali soldiers had arrived and broken into the building, robbing the vehicles we had parked there. So we had an army invading diplomatic premises and looters who were coming over the wall shooting at us. I sent a message to the Department pointing out that matters were clearly getting out of hand and requesting the immediate despatch of two platoons of parachutists from Saudi Arabia. The response was disingenuous; it said that no airborne soldiers were available, which was hardly consistent with what we knew to be our force deployment for "Desert Storm." I later learned that the Washington answer reflected Bob Gates' concern that lives would be lost if the troops were detected floating into our compound--an understandable concern given the proximity of the compound to the violence--which was the reason our request was made in the first place.

On the January 3, we were told that the ships were underway and would arrive off-shore earlier than anticipated. Then the Marines on board would be available to land in the compound. I might note that the ships originally had been despatched under orders to travel at a rate that would conserve fuel--so they did not come at flank speed. But sometime after they had sailed, they were instructed to travel at maximum speed, which was the reason why they were going to arrive off-shore earlier than expected. In the meantime, we were taking more flak, hitting close to some

of our staff. One of fellows had an AK-47 burst go through a wall just over his head. A rocket-propelled grenade went through one of the buildings.

The French sent a ship off shore and they tried to load some of their Embassy people on a number of small boats on the beach. But that plan went awry when the Admiral commanding the Somali Navy threatened to sink the French ship for having intruded into sovereign waters. The Italians, who were going to evacuate through the Mogadishu airport, had their planes on the ground along with ours at Mombasa, unable to land at Mogadishu for the same reasons that we were unable to use that airport. The Germans were in a similar situation; they too had some aircraft not too far away, which were also not able to use the Mogadishu airport because the violence around the airport prevented their people as well as all foreigners from reaching it.

In the meantime, probably in late December, I received word from a friend in the Pentagon telling me that the military had its hands full in the Persian Gulf and might not be able to help us. He suggested that we should begin to explore other evacuation routes using our own devices. I put the Defense Attaché in charge of Plan B, which would have taken us out of Somalia overland into Kenya. It was a plan developed out of desperation because it meant driving into and through civil war, banditry and lawlessness. For some crazy reason, the Station Chief kept urging that I take this course rather than wait for the Marines. I had no doubt that Plan B would have led to some casualties, if not some deaths, and therefore much preferred to wait for the rescue mission.

We had to withdraw from the most exposed parts of the compound which meant taking everyone out of the Residence, which had become a dormitory with all furniture and floors occupied by sleeping staff and the Nigerian Ambassador. There were probably 40 people sleeping and eating in the Residence. We did eat quite well; I managed to keep some pretty good cooks as well as our household staff. We even had a couple of Italian businessmen staying with us, who to show their gratitude, cooked up a nice spaghetti dinner. On most evenings, I would work late in my office; so often, by the time I arrived at the Residence, the meal was over. One evening, soon after the Nigerian Ambassador became our "guest", when I came home, I was told that he had not eaten. I inquired whether he was well. He said that he couldn't possibly begin his meal until his host had been seated. He was a very nice fellow, a Hausaphone. So for the rest of the time, we had our meals together.

As I said, we evacuated the Residence and moved everyone into either the administrative building or the Chancery itself. The Marine House was also evacuated. By January 4, we had several hundred foreigners in the compound to whom we were providing refuge and food and some medical care--some had arrived wounded; one was nine months pregnant. I had insisted that anyone staying in the compound be disarmed including the Turkish Ambassador's bodyguards. I didn't want anyone to have arms who was not under my direct control. We had allowed a number of vehicles to be brought into the compound, but I insisted that the keys be left in the cars so that if looters managed to scale our walls at night, they could just drive off with the vehicles without trying to enter the safe haven with guns drawn to get the keys by force. I left instructions at the JAO building that one of our staff members who was an expert in weapon use would be stationed inside the entrance with an UZI--a submachine gun; he was to use it only if there was an effort made at forced entry into the building. Looters who might roam the

compound were not to be challenged and could take with them anything they could. We had a large warehouse filled with all sorts of goodies; we hoped that if the looters did climb over the wall they would be so attracted by the warehouse that they would leave those safe havened alone. I used some money to buy additional weapons to supplement the arms that the Marines had. I issued those to Embassy staff who had military training and whom I felt would use the weapons with discretion. There were some people who were assisting Bob Noble at the gate, discouraging Somalis from trying to enter the compound. John Fox, our political officer, the consular officer, and another Embassy officer had the difficult job of manning the gate; they had to decide who might be admitted. They were regularly under fire from shots fired at the gates from the chaos outside the walls; they had to "hit the deck" frequently. It was very difficult for them to turn people away which meant that they couldn't be evacuated, but we had to maintain some limit on the size of the community in the compound.

The "Guam" had been instructed to maintain radio silence. Our senior communicator was a former Navy communicator. Using his experience he was able to find the "Guam" rather than it finding us. Once he had established radio linkage, the "Guam" was then authorized to communicate with us. I had told the Defense Attaché that he would be responsible for dealing with the US military because I knew from my Liberian experience from various commands that he would be asked the same questions many, many times over and over again. Our military would wish to know levels of detail on what was going on and would undoubtedly become very annoying. I suggested to him that he "keep his cool" because these were the forces upon whom our safe evacuation depended.

On the night of January 4, we slept as best we could in the expectation that the first Marines would come in at day break. The "Guam" had been instructed to pack as many Marines as could be safely accommodated in helicopters that could be refueled in the air--CH-53s--of which the "Guam" only had two (from the Trenton). Further, the "Guam" was instructed to launch the choppers as soon as they could safely reach Mogadishu with aerial refueling to be provided along the way by C-130s operating from Saudi Arabia. So fifty Marines and ten Seals--the Navy special rescue personnel--were put aboard the two helicopters. The Seals were put aboard to give me personal protection, which I found somewhat excessive since I was inside a compound. When they landed, we found more productive uses for them. In any case, the helicopters took off for a 450 mile trip over the ocean. Their navigation system failed; the helicopters had not been exercised for months for a rescue mission since they certainly did not expect to be used for this purpose. They had to make contact with the C-130 twice over the ocean in the middle of the night for refueling. In the course of the refueling, one of the lines broke, drenching Marines with jet fuel. A crew chief managed to seal the pipe break allowing the helicopter to finish its flight rather than return to its ship.

Before leaving the "Guam", the Marines had of course prepared a plan of action. Someone suggested that a check be made whether there were any Marines on board who might have served in Mogadishu, who could provide first-hand knowledge of the area. In fact, an NCO was found who had left Mogadishu about a year earlier. He looked at the plan and said that he thought it looked pretty good, but that unfortunately it appeared that the Marines would be put down in the wrong place. The plan had been developed on the assumption that the Embassy was still in its old

location; the NCO said he thought the Embassy had moved about six months earlier. So despite the visit by the DELTA team and all of our E&E plans, the Marines were preparing to rescue us from the old Embassy, which was by the sea; in fact we were six miles away. A potential catastrophe was avoided. I think it was indicative of the fact that our rescue was just a side-show to the war in the Gulf. The intelligence people, from whom our location should have been transmitted accurately, were focusing on "Desert Shield"; Mogadishu was just a side-show.

When the Marines flew in at dawn, they were told to look for a golf course. They expected an American course with greens and flags; our course featured cows, camels, manure and some trees and sand. The greens were black oiled; so the Marines could not recognize the course. We had a strobe light on the southern part of the water tower--which was the highest feature on the compound. The helicopters flew so low that they went under the light and since it was dawn they didn't see the flashing light nor the American flag. So they flew back out to sea and then returned and found us.

The Marines settled in our large compound. I went out to meet them as they were piling out of the helicopters. They looked baffled. Here were a bunch of civilians, some white, some black, some armed, some not; there were some camels running around; there were some Somali employees of the Embassy. I made my way to the officers in charge and took them to the Chancery where I introduced my staff and discussed what we would be doing until the "Guam" could come close enough to launch the helicopters that couldn't be air refueled but had to take us out to the mother ship. We were told that it would take approximately another 18 hours for the "Guam" to be close enough to mount the evacuation effort.

As a participant of the previous summer's dispute in Washington over who would be in charge of Marines on an Embassy compound, I did not raise the issue in communications to the Department. I thought that common sense would rule the day when the Marines would actually arrive. I asked the Marine in charge what his instructions were; he said that his instructions were to follow my lead. That sounded good enough for me. The Marines deployed as they felt the military situation dictated. I did make it clear that no weapon was to be fired unless a Marine's life was directly threatened or unless I authorized otherwise; that was no problem. As the Marines went around the compound, they found scaling ladders on our side of the wall; the looters were entering the compound when the helicopters were landing and decided to leave, when they saw the Marines disembarking.

Not too long thereafter, two Marines went to the top of the water tower via an inside staircase. There was a trap door through which they could observe what was going on outside the wall; that had been our observation post after we evacuated the apartment building across the street. The Marines reported that they were being fired upon from some people whom they had spotted; they asked for permission to fire back. I did not grant their request because I was concerned that it might start a much greater fire exchange. I told the Marine commander that if the tower was too dangerous, he would have to find another observation post and suggested the top of the Chancery. That afternoon, we had a couple of 50 mm shells smack into the Chancery; the Marines requested permission to fire back. When I asked who was firing, the Marines didn't know; I suggested that just returning fire randomly would not be a very effective use of our

limited fire power.

Later in the evening, helicopters were beginning to come in with pilots using their night vision devices. They wanted to maintain that capability for the return trip to the ships which were under "blackout" orders. However they needed the lights in the compound to be on so that they could find us in the dark. The question than arose on how the compound lights might be turned off quickly. Some one suggested that they just be shot out as the helicopters landed. I thought that might just invite fire from the people outside the wall who might have thought that the fire was being directed at them.

The previous night some one reported that he had seen a heavy machine gun being taken the apartment building across the street, form where the Somalis could interfere with the arrival of the Marine task force and the evacuation that was to follow soon thereafter. That was worrisome. Some one proposed sending an armed party into the apartment building; we were told that a C-130 gunship would fly cover for the Marines when they choppered in. That plane had the capability of knocking the building down in a few seconds if the machine gun fired. Unfortunately, the gunship arrived an hour later because someone forgot that Mogadishu's time as one hour earlier than Mombasa's.

During the day, we prepared ourselves for evacuation. We sent some people out to rescue the British Ambassador and the German Charge '. A Somali military officer, who had a previous relationship with us, agreed to take a car and negotiate a cease-fire by the government troops so that he could extract the two. That was a brave act. The Soviets had come on the air the day before reporting that their compound had been looted and that they were pretty uncomfortable. Vladimir, the Ambassador, was my tennis partner and an very interesting person--a real Africanist who spoke Swahili and had served in every east Africa country. He came on the radio and he asked for "Yankee." So I talked to him; he wanted to know whether we could evacuate him and his staff. I said that we would be glad to have him come with us, but that we couldn't send anyone to their compound to rescue them; they would have to make their own way to ours. I wasn't going to risk any of our people to rescue Russians. When he saw our first helicopters come in the next morning, he knew that we would not stay in Mogadishu much longer. I told him that I would see whether Major Siad, the Somali officer, would be willing to undertake another rescue mission. The Major was willing to try, if he was paid enough. So we gave him some more money. And indeed, he brought a big group of Soviets to our compound--something like 36 or 37 of them. I invited Vladimir into my office; I offered him and his wife the use of my shower. They accepted my offer. The next thing I found out was that Vladimir had disappeared; he just left the bathroom and was walking around the Chancery. I had to remind him that our hospitality had its limits. We sent both him and his wife downstairs into the air conditioned part of the Chancery where they waited until the rescue helicopters arrived.

A senior Somali general turned up, escorted by the Station Chief; they were "friends". The Somali wanted to be evacuated, but I told him that we were not authorized to include Somalis in our rescue--only third-country nationals. The general had been drinking; he said he would go shoot himself and his family at the gate. The Marine Colonel, Willie Oates, whose specific responsibility was to stick with me at all times was sitting in my outer office. He was about

6'4"--a huge man. I asked him to come into my office and requested that he conduct the Somali general to the gate. That was the end of that story!

The helicopters started to come in at midnight and began to take people out. They landed in groups of five. I got a message from Bob Noble at the main gate saying that Major Siad was there with a grenade in one hand and a radio in the other; he was threatening to bring artillery fire on the compound because we were violating Somali sovereignty; i.e. landing helicopters without government permission. He wanted to talk to me about it. I told Noble to send him in and I met Siad outside the Chancery building. He came with an interpreter, but the grenade had been removed as the price of admission into the compound. He had said that he would give up his grenade if Noble took the clip out of his machine gun. Noble chambered a round and then took out the clip and brought Siad to the Chancery, which was surrounded by Marines in their camouflage and Seals in grease paint standing in the shadows beyond the lights. The Major first objected to the rescue operation; then he wanted us to take out his family. I told the Major that he was being very foolish trying to interfere with the operation because Somalia would eventually have to recover from the ongoing bedlam and would need the assistance of all the countries represented in the compound. If the diplomats and citizens were shot, those countries certainly would not be helpful. Finally, he agreed to let the rescue operation proceed; he did not use his radio to call in artillery fire.

Our conversation continued for another hour while the helicopters came in and lifted people out. Finally, there was no one left except Bob Noble, the Seals, the Marines and myself. There were just two helicopters on the ground waiting for us. So I told Siad that I did not have authority to allow him to get on board because command had now been transferred to the Admiral on board the "Guam", but I told Siad that I would ask the Admiral if it were possible to send another helicopter back for Siad and his family. By this time, Siad had given up his radio; he asked me whether he could have my car--an armored Oldsmobile. I went to find the keys and gave them to him; the car was obviously not going to be of much further use to the US government. So Siad left; Noble and I looked at each other and headed for the last helicopter. We took a seat in the back; then a Marine officer came in and squeezed in. He looked at me and said: "My God, sir, you are the Ambassador; you can't sit back here!" I told him I was quite comfortable, but that didn't dissuade him. So I had to leave the helicopter, reboard and sit behind the waste gunner, which was even an even more exposed area. But I did get a chance to watch our lift-off and see where we were flying. That was January 6, 1991.

I had asked the Marines to give me the flag that we flew on Sundays. We flew the flag every day, but on Sundays, we had a small special ceremony when we raised the flag--it was larger that the rest. And it was that flag that I brought out with me in an Embassy-Mogadishu knapsack.

I should note that unlike many of our other evacuations, this was not interfered with by people climbing the walls to try to loot what was left in the compound or trying to get aboard the helicopters. Our local guards--recruited and trained by Noble--apparently dissuaded any attempts to climb the walls. One of the most painful aspects of our evacuation was leaving our local employees behind. I had asked Washington for authority to use the helicopters to move them to safer areas in Somalia; we had been told that our ships were supposed to land us in Kenya and

knew the Kenyans didn't want Somali refugees. So evacuating our local employees with us was out of the question. But I thought we might be able to help them a little by moving them to safer areas. Washington did not approve my request. I called a meeting of our local employees--held under a tree in the compound--during a lull in the fighting. I explained that we couldn't take them out with us, but I did tell them that we would turnover to the elders among them the keys to the commissary and that they would be welcome to all the provisions that were still there and in the warehouse. Banks had been closed for sometime; so that we had not been able to pay our employees. I promised that we would try to get someone back into Mogadishu as soon as possible to pay them the wages they were due. They were very understanding; we had no major outcry even though we knew that someone would very much like to have come with us.

We had one special Somali. The AID Director and his wife had long intended to adopt a Somali child. They had been in touch with the nuns in a nearby hospital. When the violence began to spread, the nuns called and told them that they could have a recently born little girl. The American couple got her and then came to live with me in my house. When it came time to leave, they asked me whether they could bring the little girl with them. I said: "Of course!" They were worried about what Washington might say. I suggested that the issue never be raised; Washington could find out about her after we landed on the “Guam.” In any case, I spent Friday evening before the evacuation with this little girl on my lap.

We landed on the ship about 3 a.m. and were sort of tired. The sailors had done their best to make the evacuation as humane an experience as possible. Some even dressed up as clowns to make the kids feel more at ease. They left their staterooms to make room for some of us. We were fortunate that on the "Guam" there was a set of officers' accommodations for a command element that was not on board. The Commodore who used to occupy those quarters had come with the ship, but had left his staff behind in Oman; so there were some extra accommodations available. I suggested that the AID director, his wife and the baby be put in one of the staterooms--it had been reserved for me, and I took a smaller, but quite comfortable room which I also used as an office for the next few days. The "Guam" 's officers very graciously tripled up in their quarters making us quite comfortable. Everyone was very happy to be aboard a US ship; I didn't hear any complaints. The ship also had an infirmary which took care of our needs. Even the diplomats were so happy to be on board that we had no complaints about any protocol issues.

Schwarzkopf did not want the ship to go to Mombasa. He insisted it return to Oman because he wanted it back in the combat zone as soon as possible. So instead of a quick trip to Mombasa, we were on board for five days en route to Oman.

One day, the Russian Ambassador and I helicoptered to the Trenton which was carrying his staff. There were TV stations on each of the ships which allowed us to communicate our thanks to the crews of both ships. Religious services were held aboard the "Guam". I attended both the Catholic and Protestant services and I invited my Russian colleague to join me for some good music.

The ambassadors asked whether they could have formal session with the ships' senior officers at which they could formally proffer their thanks. The Soviet asked whether he could speak

privately to the officers after the formal meeting. That was arranged; he talked not only about how grateful he was, but how confident he was that the Soviet and American navies would never be engaged in hostilities against each other.

Our Ambassador in Oman was kind enough to invite me to come out to his residence for lunch after getting our people off the ships, into a holding area, and arranging for them to have some cold beer. There were a couple of staff members in his Embassy with whom I had served previously. After lunch, I went back to the warehouse where I spent the rest of the afternoon with the people who had been in Mogadishu with me. The evacuation plane came late in the afternoon; we got on board and were flown to Frankfurt. We were met there at 3 a.m. by Pierre Shostal, the Consul General, and the German Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, whom I must praise for his courtesies. He thanked us for all we had done for his fellow citizens in Mogadishu. Pierre thoughtfully brought us a bunch of parkas; we of course had no winterwear whatsoever. We then went to a nearby hotel and just crashed. When I got up, I had to face a small problem with the commercial airline that was supposed to take us back to the US. We ended up spending a fair amount of time at the airport before we finally boarded. Then it was off to New York, where arrangements had been made to whisk us through customs--I am not sure we even saw a customs officer.

Then it was on to Washington on a scheduled flight. We had a nice reception at National Airport from the members of the families that were awaiting us. Davidow and some friends from the African Bureau met us. We landed on a weekend.

On Monday, we were asked to meet in the Department. The only debriefing that ever took place was with a psychiatrist who asked how we had survived our ordeal.

ROBERT J. KOTT
Diplomatic Survey Team
Somalia (1991-1992)

Mr. Kott was born and raised in New York City. He earned degrees from St. John's University in New York City and from the University of Oregon. After service with the Peace Corps in India, Mr. Kott joined the Foreign Service in 1971. An African specialist, Mr. Kott served in, Togo and Cameroon as Economic and Political Officer and in Malawi and Senegal as Deputy Chief of Mission. He also served in Indonesia and Canada. Mr. Kott was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

Q: We had already by that time evacuated, closed down the Embassy?

KOTT: I had no sooner gotten my assignment in December when Jim Bishop had to evacuate the embassy by helicopter on January 1st and January 2nd of 1991, I believe. So from January until I left Calgary on July 5th or 6th I really didn't know where I was going to be going. I was packed for

Washington, I was packed for Mogadishu and I was packed for a possibility of going to Nairobi because there was some talk of putting me out there as the Mogadishu watch, as the Somalia watch, living there. To make a long story short, I wound up going back to Washington. It became clear to me very quickly, as in about three hours after getting to Washington, as opposed to the six months before being away from Washington, that I wasn't going anywhere. People were bailing out, breaking their assignments, and eventually I said, "I think we ought to make some decisions here." Exactly at that time promotion news came out, I found out I got promoted into Senior Service, one thing lead to another, broke the assignment, the system decided that everyone was free to break their assignments because of the uncertainty of the situation.

Q: Related to Somalia?

KOTT: To Somalia, yes. In fact, Jim Bishop made a conscious decision that he was not going to go back himself even if we have reopened the post, as Ambassador. I sort of perched in the East African Office of the State Department and in fact was asked to lead a small group out to Somalia, not on a diplomatic, peace-keeping effort but really just a look-see. To see what the condition was on the ground and whether we could open our Embassy in some manner. So I took a group of mostly security, DS (Diplomatic Security) people, and we went into Mogadishu for about three or four days as I recall. Did a survey and we made a recommendation that it would be possible. It was a lull in the fighting at that time. The real civil war had sort of not yet broken out. We made a recommendation that we could probably salvage the remnants of the old Embassy, where I think USAID was headquartered, but that the new Embassy which had just opened and we'd spent something like 180 million dollars to build this compound was so totally trashed that it was really not worth even considering. Anyway, we made our recommendation, we put some figures on it, knowing that it would cost a few million dollars to do this. But it all became rather mute when the civil war really flared up again and it was obvious we weren't going back in the near term.

Q: Was it difficult to get in and out on this mission? There were commercial flights?

KOTT: No, we flew commercially to Kenya from Washington and then we chartered an aircraft, the Embassy in Nairobi helped us charter an aircraft. We met with all sides, I might add. The purported president of the day Ali Mardi and his government, his Foreign Minister, the former Prime Minister, the deposed president. We met with the chief war-lord, Aidid. That is to say, the father of the current Aidid, who was the major protagonist of the day. They all wanted us back. All sides wanted the American presence. Basically the message I conveyed, because I really didn't have any instructions to go much further, was, "If you guys make peace, we'll be back. If you can ensure our security we'll be back, but look at what you have just done to our Embassy, much less what you are doing to your country." We weren't really in a position to go beyond that. But it was interesting that from all quarters, at least their statements were, that they really wanted an American presence. They really didn't… I think they've lost their faith in the Italians who were by and large the principal diplomatic players and major influences theretofore. And I think they were really looking to us to broker the peace out there.

Q: Were the Italians still there, still open and functional?

KOTT: I did meet the Italian Ambassador. I guess the Italian embassy was fairly reduced in size, but based on what I was being told by others, and I didn't have an awful lot of expertise at the time. I think he was fairly discredited, at least in certain quarters. He was not seen as being neutral. The Italian agenda was pretty well known at the time.

Q: Taken sides.

KOTT: Yes, so I think he had outlived his usefulness quite frankly, and that's probably why they wanted us back.

Q: Were other embassies there too or not much?

KOTT: I don't recall. The French may have been there, the Brits may have been there, I don't recall. I distinctly remember meetings with the Italians, but I don't recall meeting with the others. They may have at least temporarily pulled out, like we did.

BRANDON H. GROVE, JR.
Director, Somalia Task Force
Washington, DC (1992-1993)

Ambassador Grove was born in Illinois on April 8, 1929. He received a bachelor's degree form Bard College and master's degree form Princeton University. He served as a lieutenant in the United States Navy from 1954 to 1957. His career in the Foreign Service includes post at New Delhi and Berlin. In addition, he served as Ambassador to Zaire and was Director of the Foreign Service Institute. He was interviewed by Thomas Stern in 1994.

GROVE: Some activities are fully anticipated; indeed, they are launched by the government, bringing with them an obligation to pre-load crisis management aspects. For the Gulf War, a large task force was convened in advance, operating for many months under the astute direction of Ambassador Mary Ryan. It was so effective as a management tool that it was kept in being longer than necessary. A second example is the Somalia humanitarian relief operation, whose task force I led. The US government decided to take the initiative in this case, which provided the opportunity to create an appropriate task force in advance and coordinate from the beginning activities designed to launch and manage our relief efforts.

A task force is usually necessary when there is need for central management of government activities in a foreign policy emergency which will endure for more than 48 hours. This may seem like a short time frame, but no bureau is staffed to act around the clock for longer than two days. Some of the components that make task forces necessary are these:

(1) Need for extensive coordination by the executive branch within its own ranks, with congress,

the UN, other governments, private citizens, the media and private voluntary organizations;

(2) policy and operational complexities of such magnitude that a constellation of carefully chosen, dedicated people is required;

(3) recognition that US government involvement will be around-the-clock; the rest of the world is not on Washington time and informed people in Washington must always be available;

(4) major use of resources (people, money, time, space, equipment, relief supplies, etc.) which must rely on adequate delivery systems; and

(5) need for a visible, recognized, and empowered center which becomes the reference point for information and coordination of actions.

The task force process responds to all of these needs. It serves senior leaders directly and outside "the system." It prepares status reports at least twice daily, usually in messages sent to our posts around the world. It coordinates the activities of the Department of State on a world-wide basis, as well as those of other agencies. It becomes the repository for records in the evolution of a crisis: actions taken, meetings held, options considered, responsibilities assigned. Its extensive files become the institutional memory, at least for the duration of the crisis. Its experiences in getting started and functioning efficiently should become accumulated knowledge for successor task forces to draw upon as they, themselves, get launched.

DIRECTOR, SOMALIA TASK FORCE: 1992-93

On the afternoon of November 18, 1992, while at my Georgetown University office where I was a diplomat-in-residence at the School of Foreign Service, I received a call from Frank Wisner, then under secretary of state for security assistance, science and technology. I had worked with Frank when he was a deputy assistant secretary in the African Bureau and I was in Zaire. Frank wanted to know whether I would be interested in serving as the president's special envoy to Somalia to replace Peter de Vos, who had just completed a year in that function. I said I would be. This was at the time Somalia was falling apart through starvation and the chaos created by warring factions at each other's throats. It was a situation disturbing to us, the UN, and the world at large.

<u>Somalia Background</u>

Having crammed in all the briefings I could, I was prepared to leave for Somalia on a particular Monday. The preceding Friday, Acting Secretary Eagleburger decided that Robert Oakley, a retired foreign service officer and former ambassador to Somalia, should become the envoy. General Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, knew Oakley well and had suggested him for the job in light of Bob's previous experience in Somalia as ambassador and his extraordinary range of contacts within the US government, both at the NSC, where they had served together, and in the Pentagon. He was the best possible choice.

I was asked, instead, to head up the task force in Washington that would support Bob in Somalia as he tried to get the leading factions to come to the table and permit food relief supplies to flow unhindered. I was to report to Wisner, a stipulation Frank and I established at the outset. We recognized that if I were to coordinate a famine relief program at policy levels, I would need to be speaking for an under secretary since it was the bureaus, headed by assistant secretaries, that would need to be coordinated. These bureaus would at one time or another have opposing views, as would other agencies, especially Defense.

At Frank's Kalorama home over drinks, Frank, Bob Oakley and I put together our instructions, aided by assistant secretary for African Affairs Herman Cohen. This document laid out a charter for Bob and me: it spelled out what each of us was expected to do, and what our formal lines of authority would be. It was later distributed over Frank's signature to the relevant offices in the Department. I say "formal lines of authority" because Oakley's bureaucratic style was, as always, free form and wide-ranging. It could become exasperating at times, but turned out to be essential in this crisis. Without Oakley's creative and unbureaucratic ways, the relief operation would have been much more difficult to accomplish and would not have succeeded so well, so quickly.

The Cold War was over, and we were no longer competing with the Soviet Union for bases and influence in this strategically located country on the Indian Ocean. An insurgency early in 1991 toppled the government of Siad Barré. US Gulf War helicopters rescued the staff of the American embassy from its rooftop. The provision of arms by both sides during the Cold War left clan leaders an arsenal from which to help themselves as they fought each other and prevented emergency food supplies from reaching their destinations. The US took the initiative in Somalia, and we could therefore prepare our actions in advance. By late 1992, Somalia's government had collapsed. It didn't exist. There had been 500,000 starvation deaths already and people were dying at the rate of 10,000 a day. The media's graphic coverage of scenes of starvation made the famine in Somalia understandable to a world-wide audience. We had reached the point in our involvement through the UN at which the existing international relief efforts, like Somalia's government, had also collapsed.

Five hundred UN-Pakistani troops at Mogadishu's airport were helpless and pinned down by forces of the local clan leaders. It was obvious the situation required greater relief efforts, bolstered by serious military support to permit deliveries and end pillaging. These efforts could only take place through US leadership and would need the president's agreement. The strongest course of action would require US military involvement under overall UN auspices. In light of the magnitude of our prospective immersion in Somalia's humanitarian relief, it made sense to set up a task force in the State Department to establish a policy framework and coordinate operations.

Setting Up a Task Force

Task forces are needed as *ad hoc* and temporary mechanisms to manage problems or explore issues outside the normal flow of business. They routinely deal with emergencies or operations of unusual scale. Coordinating Gulf War policy engaged a huge interagency task force in the State Department for more than a year. The Jonestown suicides in Guyana, overseas plane crashes with

many Americans on board, an earthquake in Mexico City, a mob's attack on our embassy in Pakistan, are all events that cannot be managed according to lines of authority on organizational charts. They cut across many areas of responsibility and no one, except at the top, has a mandate to direct the overall effort, in which State has the leading role.

Authorities and responsibilities of various bureaus and agencies, many of them determined by law and regulation, are brought to bear by representatives who sit around a long conference table in one of the task force suites of State's Operations Center on the seventh floor, where sophisticated communications systems are available to them. Often they have not known each other before, and the task force director must begin immediately to build a team by defining objectives, procedures and responsibilities. Secure phones and fax machines keep members in touch with their bosses in Washington and with the rest of the world. Maps of many scales are taped to the walls. CNN runs silently on the overhead TV until it focuses on the emergency at hand, when all stop working to listen to what is new and how events are being covered, or what the White House and Defense Department spokespeople are saying. In a disaster, task force members with consular experience receive phone calls, often frantic, from families inquiring about relatives. They are trained in the painful ways, requiring extraordinary sensitivity, of conveying tragic news or the lack of news. The strain on these people, who are anything but unsympathetic bureaucrats, is enormous. Sometimes they break down in tears after a string of such calls, and need to be rotated to restore their perspectives and composure.

In the task force suite, plastic status boards record information, time lines, pending items, phone numbers, and endless check lists. People quietly talk into their phones, draft telegrams and write situation reports. Someone keeps the status boards current. There are long hours of boredom when nothing seems to be happening. Around the table people catch up on work, read newspapers, chat, doze, eat food that is not permitted in the area, or stare at the television set. And suddenly, something unexpected. Oakley is on the phone from Mogadishu. A Marine jeep has hit a road mine and there are casualties. The task force snaps back to life.

I put together a task force of about 12 people who would work around the clock in three shifts, and was given latitude in picking its State Department members. They were people who had other, regular assignments but who, for the duration of the task force, were loaned to us. Many enjoy task force assignments as an intense experience in learning and doing, a change in routine, and the prospect of having solid performance rewarded by a letter of commendation in their promotion files. I started with the selection of a full-time deputy, Ambassador David Shinn, a broadly experienced officer with extensive knowledge of the Horn of Africa who is an excellent manager. He was one of the principal authors of the insightful (but ignored) "*State 2000*" report, which addressed the functions and management issues of the State Department.

That was the smartest decision I made. It freed me to think about the larger problems of our work, lead our negotiations with the UN, and be a sort of super-coordinator. David had just finished his work on "*State 2000*," and I had been pulled out of Georgetown University. We had no bureau roots or conflicting loyalties. In an innovation, we recalled three retired FSO's with expert knowledge of East Africa to be permanent shift coordinators, presiding over the task force table as team leaders for each 8-hour shift. They became known as the experienced and reliable

coordinators of our work who would head their shifts at the same times each day or night. Their foreign service backgrounds were invaluable. We gave our coordinators authority to react quickly and truly serve as issue managers. We obtained an extremely capable senior foreign service secretary, Elka Hortoland, as the task force's administrative assistant. We found that working secretaries in shifts without a permanent supervisor was hopeless, because information was not passed on from one to the other and their level of skills was uneven.

We harnessed the needs of "tasking" assignments to bureaus and other agencies, such as Defense and AID, into a process managed by Stuart Jones, a sharp and persistent officer borrowed from the Secretariat staff, whose day-long job was to ride herd on these assignments and our other deadlines. We rarely initiated memoranda or wrote cables ourselves, but focused instead on crisis management. Highly particularized knowledge and information, whether about the Horn of Africa, UN resolutions, military airlifts, or humanitarian food relief uniquely resides in the bureaus. Only they have the experience, time, regional outlook and resources to pick up an intricate problem like Somalia and provide it their specialized and essential attention. If one thinks of the Somalia effort as a pie cut in many wedges, the responsibility of the task force was to keep the policy rim intact and the wedges in proper proportion to each other through time.

Task forces bring together people who have never before worked as a team, and launching a task force has its own headaches. Initially, we experienced a complete turnover in personnel with each new shift, and it was like starting all over again every eight hours. Task force members were not sure what they were supposed to do, or what records to leave of their actions and pending problems. At first, some bureaus were not sending their good officers or secretaries because they wanted to keep them on regular work. We got off to a bumpy start.

Members of a task force need to understand each other in human terms, as well as in their bureaucratic relationships. As they get to know each other the mood relaxes, trust builds, they help each other out, and tensions are broken by humor. The pressures of work in windowless confinement create bonding that is surprising in its intimacy and openness among people who barely know each other. One's sense of real time gets blurred. People feel themselves on a common journey during their shifts, sometimes staying around beyond the end for companionship and the intrinsic interest of an unfolding drama. The best in themselves and their skills often emerges effortlessly and generously. The task force experience, I thought, is not unlike serving on a jury that deliberates a long time. On Christmas Eve, I sat alone and uninterrupted, watching Jimmy Stewart on television in "It's A Wonderful Life," until David Shinn took the next shift at 6:00 a.m.

Somalia Decision

By November 18, 1992 a few days before I returned to the Department from Georgetown, a memorandum had been written to Acting Secretary Eagleburger describing the situation in Somalia as catastrophic. By this time, the US had become the largest food donor for over a year, but clan leaders in Somalia were blocking delivery of aid in defiance of the UN. The memo began with the recommendation that the US continue on its course and that a supplemental appropriation be requested to provide additional relief. There was a cautionary note from the

Bureau of International Organization Affairs (IO) about becoming further engaged, because this might require commitment of US military forces. IO argued that our national interests were not directly involved and the use of force under these circumstances, even for humanitarian purposes, might set an undesirable precedent.

The majority view, however, was that we could not be idle while people were dying in such large numbers. The UN needed to show it could act decisively in crises of the post-Cold War world. There was no argument about our relationship with the UN: we should not get in front of it, especially in dealing with political problems in Somalia. At issue was the nature of US interests in becoming involved in a massive humanitarian relief effort under the chaotic circumstances prevailing in Somalia. On November 23, a memorandum to the National Security Council was prepared for the president, offering several options for future US involvement in Somalia's famine. This document raised, for the first time, the question whether, if the US were to become militarily engaged in Somalia, it would be under Articles VI or VII of the UN Charter. Article VI refers to "peace-keeping," a largely passive operation, while Article VII refers to "peace making" which requires armed forces poised to act.

I urged that we spell out specific exit criteria and strategies, should we become militarily engaged. Once a secure environment was established for southern Somalia, about 40% of the country, we would have done our job and could leave, letting UN forces and other countries address the remaining problems, which were mostly those of establishing political stability in Somalia. Options in the memo ranged from merely providing airlift for humanitarian supplies--to creating a US-led coalition of UN forces. We estimated that as many as 12,000 UN troops would be needed.

Our memorandum reached President Bush the day before Thanksgiving, an accident of timing which in my view turned out to be important. The moral issue came into focus during a traditional national celebration of bountiful family reunions, while others starved. Its purpose is to give thanks, but the image is of Norman Rockwell's dinner table. Depiction in the media of starvation in Somalia during this weekend was graphic, as reporters underscored the contrasts. (We went into Somalia because of television, and we got out of Somalia because of television.) Yet, we did not expect that Bush, so late in his presidency, would pick the strongest option in our memorandum: a military intervention for humanitarian purposes by United Nations forces under US leadership. It would be called "Operation Restore Hope."

Bush's decision was made after the 1992 elections, in which he was defeated by Clinton. He had only a few weeks left in office, and had successfully brought the Gulf War to an end. I thought he made the right decision. None of us at State or Defense knew then that the president believed the Somalia operation could be over by January 20, 1993, the end of his term. He hoped to end his presidency with a foreign policy flourish by doing something that would set a worthy precedent as the "new world order" emerged.

We learned from the NSC staff that Bush had consulted with president-elect Clinton, who agreed with his decision. Bush believed the operation could be finished without saddling the Clinton administration with a military commitment he had made. The reaction of just about everyone else

was that this goal was unrealistic. The Defense Department, which carried out the operation, did its best to accommodate to the deadline, but it soon became clear that we could not possibly achieve a secure environment for humanitarian relief in the southern half of Somalia by January 20.

On December 3, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 794, which established UNITAF (United Task Force) as an Article VII operation, the charter article which calls for the use of "all available means," in this case to establish a secure environment for delivery of humanitarian relief. It allows the flexibility a commander in the field must have to conduct such an operation. By December 9, the first UN forces had landed in Somalia under the command of Lieutenant General Robert Johnston.

As director of the Somalia Task Force, I also led the US negotiating delegation to the UN, an unusual arrangement but one that ensured coordination. I flew to New York with our team many times to talk with Kofi Annan, the Ghanaian Under-Secretary-General for Peace-Keeping Operations. He would later succeed a prickly Boutros-Ghali, whose frequent annoyance with US positions on Somalia was public and unrestrained, as the new secretary-general. A wise and ever courteous man who had both dignity and a warm presence, Kofi was deeply experienced in United Nations diplomacy in the most difficult area of peacekeeping. Universally respected, he was able to listen and reflect on what he heard. Maintaining his side of the argument forcefully but in a soft voice, he was certain of his brief and could adjust course without needing to seek further instructions. Kofi drops his g's at the end of a word, asking, for example, "When shall we have our next meeting'?" This engaging Ghanaian habit conveyed a certain warmth. I liked him very much, but found it difficult to penetrate his controlled and polite exterior, even his gentle sense of humor, to reach the less dispassionate and more emotional man beneath.

Kofi Annan understood the reasons behind Bush's January 20 deadline, which was making our task more difficult and straining credibility. Far removed from the realities of "Operation Restore Hope," this deadline with its origins in American politics soon became an embarrassment--or source of amusement--to everyone at the UN involved with Somalia. Kofi and his fellow negotiator Marrack "Mig" Goulding of the UK, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs and an exceptionally talented diplomat in multilateral diplomacy, arranged several large briefings for UN heads of delegation which permitted us to give political, military, and humanitarian relief updates of the situation in Somalia, and describe UN activities there in a lively way.

This was my first experience in negotiating with United Nations representatives in New York, and at times I felt uncomfortable. The United States, which does not pay the dues it owes, is indeed the five hundred pound gorilla at the table. In the Security Council, drafts of resolutions on Somalia written in the State Department were pushed through by representatives of our mission in New York, usually working behind the scenes and not disposed or authorized to accommodate - even in minor ways - the views of others, particularly those of our allies whose support, except for the French, we seemed to take for granted. French diplomacy reflects a singular passion for being alone of its kind.

Riding roughshod over others to have our way seemed unnecessary, and while a successful

exercise in power, was costing us respect. Other delegations must sometimes have viewed US representatives as driven by a single-minded desire to please Washington, no matter what. At the same time, Washington was capable of reversing gears and blaming the UN when things went awry, as the Clinton administration and congress did in the second phase of the Somalia venture, a failure largely of our own making under a Security Council resolution we had drafted and then pushed through. I could not help believing there was a better way to achieve our ends.

Ambassador Oakley's Role

A few days after Bush's decision, Robert Oakley departed as special presidential envoy to Somalia with the broadest possible mandate. He was to deal with the clan chiefs to obtain a secure environment for the imminent arrival of UN forces, most of whom would be American, and of huge quantities of relief supplies.

As all who know Bob will attest, he is a blunt, outspoken, lean and lanky Texan who is decisive, effective in relations with our military, and shrewd in his understanding of the inner workings of bureaucracy. He is also an expert on Somalia's leadership, political culture, and clan structure by virtue of his service there during 1983-84 as ambassador. He was central to the success of our mission.

Bob was in constant personal danger. He visited clan leaders in Mogadishu and the countryside to brief them on the UN operation and secure their peaceful cooperation. Bob preceded UN forces as they moved into towns and villages in the relief area, reassuring local leaders and the population that no harm would come to them and thereby securing their support. As a result, there were no armed skirmishes in the relief phase. UNITAF's few casualties were caused by land mines. His personal courage is an illustration of what a committed foreign service officer is prepared to do.

Bob not only worked on the issues of safety for UN forces, but began to consider what needed to be done to lay the foundation for a political solution to Somalia's strife. He focused on restoring a local police force. His outreach was wide: his network included elders, women, academics, jurists, athletes--anyone who might have influence over some segment of the population. He wanted as many Somalis as possible to understand the reasons for the UN presence, the role its forces were to play, and how important the cooperation of the Somali people would be to the outcome of relief efforts.

Task Force Operations

All task forces face unique circumstances. We were in the extraordinary position of being involved in a major military initiative decided upon by a lame duck president who would be leaving office with the task unfinished despite his ambitious deadline. Bush would be followed by someone new not only to the Somalia operation, but to the conduct of foreign affairs generally. We recognized it would take time to get Clinton's appointees confirmed, and there would be a leadership vacuum. We were engaged in an unusual policy role in humanitarian relief on a scale unparalleled since the end of the Cold War. We also recognized we would face

problems of coordination in a government that was going through changes in leadership and pangs of transition in every other foreign affairs agency, as well as the National Security Council staff.

We decided to strengthen process and procedures. We held two large interagency staff meetings in the State Department every week to bring together people working on Somalia, brief them on the current state of affairs, and provide them an opportunity to share their thoughts and complaints. We were in touch several times each day with Mogadishu by telephone, usually with Bob Oakley or his deputy John Hirsch. We knew in real time where Bob was, what he was doing, and what we needed to do to back him up. He also learned from us (and his many other sources) what Washington was planning and where the hangups were.

We managed essential coordination during the transition through regular meetings of the "core group" of the NSC staff. This group included representatives of State, Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CIA and AID, and was headed by Richard Clark, of the NSC staff, the most able crisis manager I know. We worked under policy guidance from the under secretaries in the NSC's Deputies Committee. The "core group" made day-to-day decisions using video conferencing; my group took care of implementation by assigning specific tasks to various parts of the Department and the other agencies. If the "core group" could not agree on something, the issue would be raised to the NSC's Deputies Committee which Admiral Jonathan Howe chaired. The National Security Council itself discussed Somalia only once or twice during the period of my involvement.
Clark and I talked each day, exchanging information and insuring that we were all moving in the same direction. We also made decisions which State's task force passed on to the Department and other agencies through our daily meetings. We had a secure interagency fax linkup which we used frequently for the transmission of classified documents. Crisis management thus remained centered in the NSC, where the pivot point was Dick Clark and his "core group."

Failure of UNOSOM II

The humanitarian phase of the Somalia operation, and my involvement in it, ended in May, 1993 with UN Security Council Resolution 814 by which UNOSOM II succeeded the US-led UNITAF operation. The emphasis shifted from providing secure conditions for delivery of humanitarian relief to peace enforcement and nation-building, an enormous and qualitative change. US forces were to draw down to about 3,800 from 25,000. Bob Oakley had left Somalia by this time and Clinton appointed Admiral Jonathan Howe, deputy National Security adviser to Bush, as the successor special envoy.
One of the most important aspects of establishing a task force is to anticipate the time when it will no longer be needed. Once the objective of a relatively secure environment for delivery of relief supplies had been attained, I thought State's African Bureau should pick up the residual task force functions and give our efforts permanent leadership. Hank Cohen, still the assistant secretary for African Affairs, was anxious that responsibility for Somalia be returned to his bureau. At the end of March 1993, we disbanded the task force in the belief that its crisis management functions were no longer required, and the regular mechanisms of government would suffice. In his thanks, Eagleburger termed the task force "a model of crisis operations in

the future," and its work "superlative."

What we did not anticipate was that the new administration would loosen its grip on the issue of Somalia, and at its highest levels fail to recognize how great the changeover to UNOSOM II's mandate would be. Problems in Africa were not high on the policy agendas of State's new leaders. I discussed Somalia twice briefly with Peter Tarnoff, the under secretary for political affairs-designate. He was to inherit Seventh Floor responsibility for the Horn of Africa. I met with Secretary Warren Christopher once at the beginning of the administration during a general review of our relationships with the UN. Madeleine Albright, our UN ambassador-designate, attended this meeting. I had briefed her earlier, and she recognized that the US had again made Somalia a major UN concern, and that UNOSOM II would break new ground. Ambassador George Moose, the assistant secretary for African affairs-designate, was not confirmed before our task force disbanded and therefore could not play a significant role, but he sat in on the meetings my deputy David Shinn and I had with Hank Cohen. Dick Clark provided continuity at the NSC.

As soon as UNSCR 814 was adopted the draw-down of American troops began, and with that process underway, the level of interest of America's new leadership in Somalia's problems continued to diminish. Yet the situation remained volatile. There still was no government in Somalia. Conditions in the Somalian hinterland had changed sufficiently to permit the achievement of our relief objectives, but chaos ruled in Mogadishu. Clans continued to fight. The police force was not a force. We were beginning to make the grave mistake of demonizing clan leader Mohammed Farah Aidid as responsible for the UN's problems in Somalia, and therefore our own. Personification of foreign policy issues can become misleading and dangerous.

In the political vacuums of Washington and Somalia, the situation deteriorated rapidly as UNOSOM II began. Any new administration has its plate full of pressing problems when it comes into power, and must promptly set priorities. It faces major gaps in senior staffing, and new people must learn their briefs. The State Department has no permanent under secretary to maintain continuity. Somalia appeared to Clinton's people to be on a track to resolution. The humanitarian phase of the operation was considered a success, a building bloc in the new world order. There had been no American combat casualties. Sufficient supplies were delivered where they were needed. Relief had been provided throughout the designated zone, and it is fair to say that for many hope had been restored. Hundreds of thousands of lives were saved. All of us who had something to do with UNITAF felt a sense of worthwhile accomplishment.

The mood was upbeat in the Spring of 1993. President Clinton welcomed home the first contingent of our troops, and received them on the lawn of the White House. The senior policy levels of government, however, were not sufficiently engaged in looking at the remaining problems, or in contingency planning should the situation deteriorate. No one worried much about Howe. He had the same free hand, essentially, that Bob Oakley had been given during the earlier period. He understood the issues from Washington's vantage point, although he knew virtually nothing at first hand about Somalia. The situation was highly unstable, but the US government was leaving UNOSOM II operations to the bureaucracy. This phase required establishment of at least some institutions of government and a civic action program in Somalia to provide stability. It may well have been a task beyond the capacity of any nation or the UN to

accomplish, and the tragedy for us is that members of our armed forces lost their lives in UNOSOM II trying to make it work.

We had anticipated the requirement for modest efforts at nation-building and had negotiated with the UN on how to proceed with UNOSOM II well before the change to Clinton in Washington. The UN was wary of undertaking this task. Its major criticisms of UNITAF were that UN forces, led by Americans, did not do enough to disarm the various factions, and that we did not devote sufficient attention to clearing Somalia of land mines--literally millions of them, mostly outside the relief areas. Disarming Somalia would be like trying to take all of the guns out of Texas. It was not feasible. How were we, in any case, to know where arms were hidden? Somalia is a vast desert, an easy place to bury weapons and even vehicles, which clan members regularly did.

A further criticism within the UN was that UNITAF did not extend its mandate into the rest of Somalia, particularly to the militant areas of the north. We were not prepared to take that step. Our objectives focused on areas that needed humanitarian relief; we would do no more than help a starving, largely concentrated population. These differences were a continuing source of tension and public friction between ourselves and the UN, much of it inspired by Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali, always a difficult man to deal with on Somalia. The media, of course, enjoy few things more than covering a scrap.

The great danger for us was what the NSC called "mission creep," a process through which, by taking one incremental step after another, each with its own persuasive rationale, the entire mission is altered without conscious decisions having been made at each stage to change it. Commitments, responsibilities, and consequences diverge increasingly from original intentions, and decision-makers find themselves sucked into a new game. "Mission creep" did happen, helped through lack of oversight by the new administration.

I agree with Henry Kissinger when he argues that national interests--definable, rational, and publicly supported--should determine the conduct of foreign policy. When new issues confront a president, such as those with an entirely humanitarian cast as in Somalia, then new difficulties arise in the definition of our national interests. Government-sponsored humanitarian relief, in contrast to disaster relief, was not part of the Cold War lexicon following our post-war efforts in Europe ending in 1950.

The decision memorandum prepared for President Bush just before Thanksgiving of 1992, which stressed both humanitarian and moral national interests in alleviating suffering in Somalia, was an innovation, an early step in redefining US interests after the Cold War. Never before had we considered peace-time humanitarian assistance on such a scale or under Article VII, which required a significant US military component abroad prepared to fight for delivery. The fact that Bush approved the option of using such force was a conscious expansion of time-honored definitions of US national interests, and has created a precedent which is bound to be invoked at some future time.

President Bush's decisions eventually put the US ahead of the UN and other governments in an institution-building effort in Somalia. I did not then believe, nor do I now, that

institution-building is a US capability. It was not in Somalia, nor is it in Haiti. The results are not yet in on Bosnia. There are worthy programs we can support through normal assistance channels and private, non-governmental organizations. Foreign governments, even in partnership with other organizations, have been unable to provide the long haul commitment, presence, control, and especially resources that serious institution-building requires. And who is to decide precisely what is best for other societies?

An incident illustrates the cultural gaps between the Somalis and ourselves, and what can be made of them. At Christmastime in 1992, some of our Marines, feeling homesick, took it upon themselves in a friendly American way to teach Somali children Christmas carols. Somalis are Muslims. This well meant effort was painted by some Somalis, especially clan leaders, as a plot on the part of foreigners to convert their children to Christianity and its cultural values. We reined in our troops. In their cynical way, clan leaders were using this incident for their own purposes. They knew the truth, but chose to keep their followers aligned against American forces, some of whom they would later kill and drag through the streets of Mogadishu.

Bureaucratic Aftermath

When our task force disbanded in March, 1993 David Shinn wrote a detailed memorandum on "Lessons Learned" in our task force experiences. We thought a careful record of what we had been through, especially in our early struggles to manage the issue, would help our successors on future task forces. The memo turned out to be about twenty pages long and contained many recommendations. We gave it to the Executive Secretary, Marc Grossman, who expressed his appreciation. Marc distributed our memo to each assistant secretary and executive director in the Department. About six months later, I became peripherally involved with another task force which had spent its first few days reinventing the wheel and making the same costly mistakes. None of its members had heard of, much less seen, our memorandum. This again describes the deplorable lack of institutional memory at the State Department.

ROBERT B. OAKLEY
Special Envoy
Somalia (1992-1994)

Ambassador Robert B. Oakley was born in 1931 in Texas. He graduated from Princeton University in 1952 and served in the US Navy until 1955. Oakley joined the Foreign Service in 1957 and served overseas in Sudan, the Ivory Coast, Vietnam, France, Lebanon, and as Ambassador to Zaire, Somalia and Pakistan. In Washington DC, Oakley served in the Office of UN Political Affairs, the Bureau of East Asian Affairs, as the Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism and for the National Security Council. Oakley was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kenney and Thomas Stern in 1992.

OAKLEY: One the day before Thanksgiving 1992, the phone rang. It was my old boss, General

Powell. He asked me to go to Somalia because the U.S. was preparing to launch a large military operation and the administration wanted someone who could represent the President together with a Marine General, Lt General Johnston. Powell told me that CENTCOM was going to provide military support for an international relief operation, UNITAF. He said that I had had good relationship with that command while I was in Pakistan. I also knew Somalia from my previous assignment as Ambassador there. He said that he knew me and had confidence in me and hoped that I would take the job. I told him to talk to Phyllis first (she was the senior deputy in INR at the time). I reminded him that the last time he drafted me - to go to Pakistan - it caused a few family problems. He asked: "Do I have to talk to her again?" I said: "Indeed you do! As a matter of fact, she is walking through the door right now." So I put Phyllis on the phone. She said: "Colin, you can have him indefinitely with one proviso: our son is getting married in San Francisco on the first of January. He has to be there for the wedding." Powell agreed. So off I went.

The first thing I did was to talk to Frank Wisner, the Under Secretary for Political Affairs. I wanted to get some feel for the situation. I had had nothing to do with Somalia since I had left Mogadishu in 1984. We agreed that I should attend a UN conference on humanitarian efforts in Somalia to be held in Addis Ababa the following Monday. That that would be the best place for me to catch up quickly on what was going on inside the country. I got on a plane and flew to Addis. When I left, no one in Washington knew exactly when the military operations would commence. But in Addis, it struck me that if I tried to return to Washington, the Marines might well launch their attack and I would be out of country. That didn't seem to make much sense; so I decided to head for Mogadishu directly from Addis. I wanted to prepare the Somali leaders and others who would be affected for the military operation.

We had a task force in the Department headed by Frank Wisner to support our efforts in Somalia. Brandon Grove was the Executive Director, with David Shinn serving as deputy. The task force was set up in the best State tradition: when you have a problem, the Under Secretary for Political Affairs sets up a task force. It did take care of the inter-agency coordination problems and I found it very useful in that role. The Pentagon, AID, State and the NSC were represented on it. I think the Somalia task force did quite well and was very useful.

That task force was abolished when Admiral John Howe went out to become the Special Representative for Secretary Boutros Ghali in March 1995 because Somalia had become a UN responsibility. When I returned from Mogadishu, I found that the Somali desk officer was the only officer in State working full time on Somalia, yet we had 5,000 U.S. troops there. I went to George Moose, the Assistant Secretary for Africa, and said that Somalia needed more attention. There was no inter-agency coordinating mechanism. I thought that the absence of that mechanism had contributed to the difficulties we were having in Somalia. I told him that I knew the task force had been abolished, but I noted that so many things were happening in Somalia that at least David Shinn should be assigned to work on Somalia full time, in addition to the desk officer. The Department needed more senior personnel; otherwise, it was bound to drop a few balls. Fortunately, the Department put David to work on Somalia; later he became the Office Director for East Africa. The Department had totally abandoned all special attention to Somalia, returning responsibility for a very active period of diplomacy to one lonely desk officer -

relatively junior at that. As I understood it and said earlier, once the Somalia problem became a UN responsibility, the U.S. lost interest since it was no longer in charge. Also Administrations had changed and in the absence of any crisis, the Department moved on to other matters. The fact that we still had 5,000 military men and women in Somalia did not seem to have attracted much State Department attention. There ensued an abysmal lack of coordination among Washington agencies.

So in October 1993 when called back to work on Somalia again, by President Clinton, I recommended that a task force be set up by Peter Tarnoff, Wisner's successor, comparable to the one that had existed in 1991. But the powers in the Department decided that they didn't want to do that. I was asked whether I would take on the assignment as Coordinator - pulling the various elements of the bureaucracy together. I said that I would not be the coordinator; that was an on-going responsibility which the administration had to learn how to do on an on-going basis. The new appointees had to learn how to coordinate the activities of the various departments and agencies. I insisted that I was just a short-term fix; that the longer run problems had to be faced by the new officials in charge. I thought that a task force under the State Department's Under Secretary was a tried and true method, but there could be other mechanisms. It helped that Frank Wisner was by this time over in the Pentagon. He and Tarnoff and Dick Clarke of the NSC discussed the matter and eventually they devised a coordinating mechanism, called the Executive Committee, which reported to the Deputies Committee - a part of the NSC system. That Executive Committee was co-chaired by Dick Clarke and Jim Dobbins, who was brought back from RAND; he was well known for his ability to manage processes and to get things done. He didn't mind telling people what to do and making sure it was done - something that the State Department had seemingly forgotten how to do. Both Clarke and Dobbins were a little abrasive, but they were good managers with a proven track record. They started to task people on a daily basis and followed up to see what action had been taken. This was entirely different from the situation that had existed only a few weeks before. It worked.

ANTHONY C. ZINNI
Deputy Commanding General
Quantico, Virginia (1992-1996)

General Zinni was born and raised in Pennsylvania. After graduating from Villanova College he joined the Marines, which became his lifelong career. His distinguish career took him to Vietnam, Okinawa, Philippines and Germany, where he served in senior level positions. Attaining the rank of General, Zinni served as Commander-in-Chief of CENTCOM, where he was deeply involved in worldwide missions including Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan. General Zinnia was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Q: Then you left. Where did you go?

ZINNI: Well, I went to Quantico.

Q: When was this?

ZINNI: This was 1992. I came there as the deputy commanding general. I wasn't there very long before Somalia obviously had gone to pot. President Bush 41 decided on a purely humanitarian basis, actually, made the decision after he had lost the election but waiting for the inauguration, that he would send a U.S. force in there to jumpstart the UN mission that was stalled. The UN mission was very small, it was put in there under Chapter VI that was basically an agreement by the parties there which had broken down. The UN committed there one small Pakistani battalion. It was insufficient to protect the flow of humanitarian food and shelter and medicine and the necessary things for the traumatized population. His intent was to send a military, U.S. military, force in there to provide sort of a military jumpstart to protect the areas to let the flow of these humanitarian goods take place and then I think, President Bush foresaw that within a few weeks or a month, the UN would come in there, they'd strike their new mission and pull us out. I was at Quantico and we were beginning to hear that the President had decided to do this and the question became whether it would be a Marine-led joint task force, predominantly Marines, or it would be the 18th Airborne Corps who would get it. The decision was made that it would be Marines and it would be the First Marine Expeditionary Force, California-based, who had CENTCOM responsibilities, Marine component responsibilities and they would take it on.

I went to my boss at Quantico and I told him, "You know, I just had this experience, not only in Africa with the meals and other things but I had the Provide Comfort experience with the Kurds and all that" and I said, "You know, I could help in some of this because of, we understood how to work with the NGOs, United Nations." I had just been through all this experience and Quantico, basically, because it's our schools, our doctrine center, development center, we try to help the operational forces. He called the commanding general, Bob Johnston of the First Marine Expeditionary Force and the Marine Corps and offered my assistance. I thought it would be in the nature of assisting with the planning, maybe going out and planning. I knew General Johnston from way back when, we were lieutenant colonels together and he said, "I would like to have you come as part of the joint task force." The commandant then said, "Okay, you can go out there as the chief of staff." I mean, it was going to be a joint task force so they looked to be getting an Army two-star general; General Johnston was a three-star. I was brigadier general still. He said he would, the commandant said, "You can have him as the chief of staff for the joint task force. " General Johnston called me up and said, "I don't want you to be the chief of staff. I want you to be the operations officer. I need you to run the operations." And he said, "I know it's a little awkward because the chief of staff will be a colonel and you'll be a brigadier general."

Well, of course, I loved it because I wanted to do the operational side. It's much more fun than the chief of staff's side. I said, "I don't have any problem." I convinced the commandant that that this was the way to go and so I went out to Camp Pendleton, joined up with them, helped them with the planning part of this and then deployed to Mogadishu. We had the Marine expeditionary unit out there that landed. You might remember that the lights and all that and they seized the port and the airfield and then we came in right behind them, about half a day later we flew in with the staff.

We had on the way out there we stopped to see the commander in chief of CENTCOM who was then General Joe Hoar, who I had known for a long time and actually had briefed about all my experiences with Provide Comfort. He really supported me going out and being part of the task force. General Hoar's vision for this, because he saw it as a short time mission, he had a, what he called, a 3-3-1 composition of this task force. He wanted three African countries to join the combined task force, he wanted three countries from the Gulf because CENTCOM was focused on the Gulf, and he wanted to demonstrate that the Gulf States, we are working together, we are coalition and one Western NATO country in there too.

Well, the Canadians had made a commitment to come so they were sending ships and planes and had a pretty good force out there. They were working on getting the African countries. They had a commitment from three: Nigeria, Botswana, Zimbabwe, but it was going to take a little while with them to get there. The Kuwaitis, the Emiratis and the Saudis would be the Gulf countries that would take a little while to get there too.

So our basic planning was around this idea. On the way out there, were flying out there, while we are in the air literally, we get a call that the French had decided to play. The French were going to come join us and the forces from Djibouti are going to come in to Mogadishu. Then, we get a call that the French insist that their general in Djibouti be the first general officer on the ground, even before General Johnston. This sounded like Truman-MacArthur and the legend about it and they insisted. And so General Johnston said, "No way. The Marines are on the ground. I'm coming in as the first commander and the French can come in later. We can work up a, initially, it's Marines, it's U.S."

In mid-air there was this big political brouhaha so finally we went out and we land and General Johnston is, who by the way spoke fluent French, was Scottish by birth and he had been battalion commander that first went into Beirut so he's a little bit incensed by this. The poor French general that arrives right after that, he's a great guy. I mean, he was a fantastic and the French forces were fantastic. He was just a victim of the political back-and-forth. He lands on the ground and he didn't care when he landed. He just wanted to contribute and help. So that was kind of our introduction.

We landed at the airport. We were trying to figure out where to set up the command post. There were all sorts of alternatives; do it at the port and the airfield which would be much better for security, much easier to maintain and supply but we made the decision that it should be in the former U.S. embassy. So we had to literally seize the embassy and the embassy was gutted, literally destroyed. The wiring was pulled out of the wall, the granite floors ripped up and everything else. When we got up there there were actually bodies all over the place. There were some refugees or displaced people living in the embassy which we had to round up and move out somewhere else so it was a horrible, horrible stated condition. Obviously, people living there and not much paying attention to sanitation, dying animals and dead bodies lying around. So we cleaned up the embassy as best we could which was a gutted, burned out set of buildings. It was a nice compound in the sense of the way it was structured. So we set up our headquarters there.

In the meantime, the president and the State Department had sent Ambassador Bob Oakley as the president's special representative for the mission there and, of course, he had been ambassador to Somalia. He was extremely helpful. He knew everybody. He knew the military, he knew the situation and knew the people so he came in. On the ground was the UN operation which was basically paralyzed. It was under an Iraqi Kurd who was the special representative of the secretary-general. It was like, as I mentioned before, a Pakistani battalion down there and there was a brigadier general they had but they were basically at the airfield under Chapter VI rules and really couldn't do much.

Q: Chapter VI means you can't use force. They are there sort of by mutual agreement.

ZINNI: Exactly. There were over a hundred NGOs operating there. I think at one time 120 so. A lot of NGOs running around, many of whom were really at risk and there had been NGOs killed and other things happening where it was impossible for them to deliver food. They had Somali gangs as security that they had hired. That's where the term technical came from. The gangs had turned against them, and I think they were paying them off and paying them bribes and allowing certain amount of the food to be bled off. It got to the point where nothing ever made it to the point where it was needed. So they were in pretty bad shape.

We had General Johnston in with a task force commanding it. We had Bob Oakley on the ground and Bill Johnson who was the president of CARE came in to run the UN's humanitarian operations center and if they were ever three people who clicked, their personalities, objectives, were all on the same sheet of music. It was remarkable. Bob Oakley comes in and asks for a meeting of the three and they sort of structured this amazing concept that they would be sort of an executive committee, one working on the political and other issues, one on the security and one working at the humanitarian and that we need to make this commitment to work together on all this. There were a lot of friction points, believe me, but certainly not at the top. Bob had asked that obviously, he had a very small team. I think he had less than a dozen people in there even if you count public-relations and some of the others and the cooks and the bakers and everything else. He had asked for support from the military side for some of his political efforts. We had a small task force that was operating out of Mogadishu doing airlifts and drops and there was a Marine brigadier general, Frank Libutti, down there, perhaps he was a colonel at the time running that operation, so he came up and we made him, we put him over with Bob and his people on the political side.

In the course of events, Bob wanted to form all these committees; a security committee, a judicial committee. Every place you saw an opportunity to work with the Somalis and do something constructive, he wanted to form a committee to work it out, work with the Somalis and we were dealing with 15 faction leaders at the time. He didn't, obviously have the people so he asked if we would provide the people. So basically we did, because we kind of brought in a stable of officers and took them out of the ranks, especially senior officers, colonels and such, to work with Bob. They actually had to send home for their civilian suits. They were to go off to Addis Ababa for the peace meetings, they worked on these committees and I was on some of these committees and I became the chief of police of Mogadishu and around the security committee. I was on the judicial committee, the political committee.

Also, we set up the civil military operations center so working with Bill Johnson's people and working with the NGOs, we sort of had a clearinghouse where we could share information, we could ensure that security was there. NGOs that couldn't work directly with the military because of their charter, some faith-based, some had to retain neutrality, the Red Cross and others, we were able to sort of exchange information at a distance. They could check in and wouldn't give the appearance of you know, anything more than slight cooperation and coordination. It wasn't easy to run that. We put a number of colonels down there to run that and other people, civil affairs and others to run that. NGOs weren't comfortable with doing that in a real military setting at our headquarters so we set that up in Mogadishu so it would be a separate entity with security to coordinate it. It wasn't easy. It was probably the most complex operation I've ever been involved in. We thought our mission was only for a few weeks and that we would basically jumpstart it but we quickly learned that Boutros-Ghali was not going to go after a Chapter VII and as we talked to his representative in Mogadishu he says, "The Secretary-General is not going to buy a poisoned apple." So basically the United Nations wasn't moving forward on what the first concept was at the jumpstart and so what we thought would be a few weeks, turned into seven months.

Q: When you got there and in the interim, how did you find the Somalis you had to deal with?

ZINNI: There was chaos. There obviously was no government structure. There were basically 15 warlords that had all staked out their piece of ground. Bob immediately brought the two most prominent warlords who had split Mogadishu, Ali Mahdi Mohamed, and Mohamed Farrah Aidid, and several other warlords together and Bob started to work toward this sort of reconciliation, sort of the creation of some sort of process for them to come together to eventually evolve into an interim government and sort out how this was going to go. It was well received initially and when we got there it was a very short time before we actually had a meeting between Mohamed and Aidid. It was an interesting meeting where we had dinner and brought the two together. They basically had agreed to try to work something out. Bob had gotten them to agree to freeze everything in place. Nobody would try to launch offenses or take land or anything like that. Now of course, all the rules that were laid down were constantly broken. There were always firefights. You had a mix of, besides the warlords you had these rogue gangs out there. They were basically just armed gangs.

They really felt they were Bruce Lee. They had to be out on the streets and shoot or fight somebody. When we got there it was the Wild West. We simply stabilized all of the outlying lands and Mogadishu, although it had its problems and there were fights occasionally, we got it down to a reasonable security at the time. We started getting in the situation where you know, to use sort of the Pottery Barn example, not even if you broke it, you touched it and you owned it. We touched it, we owned it. I wasn't there a week before there was this group of so-called Somali intellectuals who wanted to meet with me and they came to see me and they wanted to talk about when we were going to start the jobs program and when we were going to do these other things. And Bob had realized the police were always respected. They weren't part of the previous dictator's regime of oppression. A couple of the old policemen put their uniforms on, came out on the streets, started directing traffic. People gathered around them. Market stalls

opened up. They brought this sense of security and hope back. So, he decides we need to reinstall the police. The United Nations wouldn't take the job on and we were getting a little close to the wall, our own wall, about the military training police. We weren't training police, we were reestablishing the prisons, setting up the courts, we were doing everything in there. Basically, we were into nation building big time. We were running the peace mediation and we were overseeing and securing the humanitarian work. We were beginning to even get into economic reconstruction. I mean, people were brought in to look at the monetary system, sort of different monetary kinds of money running around and how it would be balanced and work, and how the monetary system would work. NGOs were now moving in some cases beyond just providing basic needs but creating markets, beginning to sell food at a nominal rate to create trade and business and some places were beginning to move on.

We had about nine sectors. We were in southern Somalia, northern Somalia. Somaliland is stable and didn't have a requirement for humanitarian aid so basically we worked from mid-Somalia down to the south. We had a lot of incidents. The warlords would go at each other. We would get hit or attacked, so there was this on again off again kind of low grade conflict that would spike once in awhile. But by the time May rolled around, and we went in in December…

Q: This was '92?

ZINNI: We went in in December of 1992, and finally Boutros-Ghali had extracted from the Clinton Administration, which inherited this mission, the agreement that if he were to solicit for Chapter VII for us, the United States would provide a quick reaction force. They wanted a strong military U.S. presence and would provide logistic support and the logistics. The U.S. military was not interested in doing this. This was supposed to be a couple of weeks, and now it has turned into months and months. Now it has turned into we're going to get a major commitment to this UN operation and that was sort of the extortion for him going forward on the Chapter VII. The Clinton Administration agreed to it so basically, in May we turned over the operation to the UN.

And the other requirement Boutros-Ghali made later on was the special representative to the secretary-general had to be an American. So retired Admiral General Jonathan Howe, who had been on the National Security Council, rather came in as the special representative and frankly, we were involved in the turnover which took forever with the UN staff, both the secretary-general's representative staff and the military staff. The military was under a Turkish general, General Cevik Bir. It was obvious that from the military side they were not getting, other than the Americans, many significant contributors, many that would be willing to stay around and contribute, not the numbers they felt they needed on the ground and they were very hesitant to take it, take control of the command. They finally did in May.

As we were getting ready to leave and we were sort of turning over and at that stage of the game it looked very promising. There were meetings in Addis Ababa that Oakley had orchestrated, the UN had run. The warlords had written some agreements on an interim government and a future way of moving forward on consultations and conferences to develop a permanent structure.

Mogadishu was relatively quiet but the vision of the United Nations really concerned us as we were going out. They didn't understand the fragility of the situation and they didn't understand how to deal with the warlords. I think they thought we had the warlords completely cowed and they can walk in and begin to dictate who plays. Oakley's philosophy was everybody has a seat at the table. We're not going to tell Somalis who should sit at the table. The only reason we would take action to expel you from the process if you did something unacceptable. He kept them all at the table. The United Nations came in and began to decide, Aidid is out, this guy is in, and make these decisions.

What concerned me and General Johnston, the Somalis were getting confused. Now there was a shift in policy, a shift in approach. Everything we had done, now the UN is coming in and had a different approach. When Bob Oakley left and his successor came in, he had a different approach than Oakley. So you had now the Somalis who had seen the first UN operation, UNISOM I which didn't work, and then they saw the U.S. led coalition come in, now they were seeing the UN and so they were seeing another change. We had great fear that this thing was going to come apart. We felt it was in good shape but very fragile, moving in the right direction. We saw all the approaches that Admiral Howe and the United Nations were going to take that were going to not work.

As we were leaving, the day we left, we did the changeover of command, if you will,

Q. This was when?

ZINNI: May of 1993. We were the last ones out. We were in two Humvees driving from the embassy down to the airport. You've got to imagine that either before or after in two Humvees, we had a couple of Marines with rifles but just that kind of minimal security. We couldn't have done that before we got there and we certainly couldn't have done it after we left but we drove down and it was a beautiful, sunny day. It was very quiet. The incidents in Mogadishu were very light.

Bob was just very quiet, just had nothing to say after it and he suddenly saw a couple of kids, young kids with schoolbooks on a street corner. He told us to stop. We got out and went over to the kids and talked to them. And he asked all of us, "Give me all your pens." We were reaching in our pockets, getting all our pens and pencils and things and he collected them all and gave them to the kids who were very appreciative and the kids were thankful and went off. And he just stood there and we had our plane waiting, we're going to get out of here, we were done. And I said to him," What are you thinking about?"

He said, "30 days."

I said, "What do you mean, 30 days?"

He said, "In 30 days this place is going to blow up."

I said, "Really?"

He said, “The UN approach to this thing is a disaster.”

Thirty one days later we had the attack on the Pakistanis that took place.

Q: Tell me, there is another aspect. You talk about Mogadishu. As I recall a real emphasis at the beginning was to get food and there was a central place inside Somalia which was the place where the trucks kept getting ambushed on the way. How was that?

ZINNI: The most difficult places were out along the Ethiopian border or on the way out. The places like Baidoa and Mandera, those with the most extreme places. It’s desolate country. There’s scrub growth just desert-like terrain. The people out there were really in bad shape and of course, the gangs were out there. It was outside Mogadishu. We really didn’t have many problems in Mogadishu. We pretty quickly gained cooperation and we had enough troops in there. In less than 19 days we had security in all of that area, and that area was bigger than the size of Texas, we had security in all the areas; we had the flow of food and everything. From nothing going out there, in 19 days we had it fully operational and with sufficient security for the convoys, the distribution points, the NGOs to go to these areas.

We broke the place down into nine sectors and basically we took a large contingent, like the French or the Canadians, they had a big sector, and then some of the smaller commitments that would come in from other nations, we would put them with them. What turned out to be this 3 – 3 – 1 concept quickly ended up in a flood of people offering forces. By the time we left in May we had the forces from 26 countries in there and it almost got to be too much and many of the contributions really didn’t add anything. They became more of a drain logistically than they contributed. The State Department was sending a list everyday of potential contributing countries. They wanted as many as possible to show their flags. We were running out of the ability to cope with these. We didn’t have that many big contributions that were sort of self contained, units that come that are solely totally self-contained, provide their own logistics like the Canadians and the French. We were getting little contingents that were totally dependent on us and when we left they had 44 possible contributors. We had 26 but they have 44 on the books willing to contribute. I don’t know where we would have put them all but they were in line to come had we not turned it over to the United Nations. That willingness to come under U.S. command and be part of this operation, that didn’t carry over to the UN piece.

Q: Okay. You’ve got Baidoa which is way up. You’ve got these technical bandits running around. How did you face them down, you and your troops?

ZINNI: Well, several ways. Obviously, out at the places, at the towns and at the distribution centers we had security there that they couldn’t come in and take a shot in the middle of the night and run away. Where we were actually located, the civilian population, the humanitarian distribution points and that sort of thing, we had plenty of security. The routes out there were secure. In other words, when we ran convoys, we had security. But obviously, they could run around between these areas. There was a lot of open area. We ran patrols out there, we ran reconnaissance units you know, special forces, Marine reconnaissance. We had helicopter and

aerial surveillance and satellite intelligence so we had a lot of ways to look at the ground. It wasn't perfect, obviously, but a lot of ways to look at the ground in between.

We had some pretty significant dustups. If they attempted to come at us, they paid a great price. They learned that pretty quickly. You had the odd gang in Mogadishu that would take a shot, a couple of times they took a few shots and we took out a few of their compounds. We had agreed to let the militias canton their weapons but they couldn't move the weapons in and out. We conducted inspections. I think in the total course from December until May we had two killed and seven wounded on the U.S. side and some other coalition casualties but they weren't significant. We did mix it up a little bit. We did inflict some casualties on the other side but they had initiated it.

I was on the security committee and the security committee was composed of the senior security officers of the militias and the warlords. Any time you had one of these dustups we would come in and meet and I would always explain what had happened. Of course, they always had a different version from their gangs and all. We had developed a very close personal relationship and I was always saying, "Look, this could be the end of the matter. Don't you trust me to say we were prudent in the use of force? It was only self-defense. If you're not, and you decide this is a causus belli, we've got to go to war, so be it. Do you really want that?" And in each case they didn't. As a matter of fact, I actually had them, they confided in, me although their bosses may want you to please you, to give you a sense of their power, that they control all these clans and militias and they are all loyal to them and under their absolute control, they were not. There are some deals that are cut, rogue militias that are sort of quasi-compliant with the chain of command and go off on their own, do their own thing. They are like gangs that sort of sign up. We knew that from our own intelligence, so you know, they didn't have full control. If those gangs got off the reservation and we had a dustup, they weren't going to use that as a cause for the entire warlord structure to go behind them, certainly.

In many ways, we defused many things. When the UN started coming in before we turned over [inaudible]. [Inaudible] told me there were gangs even within his own organization that were going to shoot up UN vehicles because they were painted white. But, he said, if you have the green vehicles, meaning our Humvees, mixed in with them, they won't take them out. So we made sure there were patrols with the green Humvees. The one guy that violated the rule, no white vehicles out on their own, was the U.S. deputy commander of the UN military task force. His driver went out and got the vehicle shot up but, fortunately, he wasn't hurt.

Q: How about the NGOs? How did they fit in?

ZINNI: Very difficult. It was not the same relationship that we had. In Provide Comfort, I would say we were feeling each other out. There were a number of NGOs that were very hesitant, reticent to cooperate but we really didn't have a lot of friction. Somalia was different. The NGOs resented the fact that they were there before we got there. They had been through hell. Now we came in and looked like the heroes. This was their perception, when they had been there before and been out in danger delivering food as best they can, we suddenly come in and we get all the press and the headlines, the military. It was clear that this was not a humanitarian mission. We

did not get humanitarian service medals for this. Our job was to provide security. It was actually a security mission, security for the NGOs. They were doing the humanitarian work. We did some of an emergency nature that was needed. The NGOs perceived that we were stealing their glory that they had earned.

The NGOs were suffering casualties. They had suffered three or four killed. While we were there a number were wounded, they were being ripped off by their own security. Their version of security and ours were different. They saw that we would come in and assign them their own platoon of Marines. There were 500 and some NGO facilities in Mogadishu. It was impossible to secure all of them. I mean, we could provide general security for Mogadishu but they had 500 and some warehouses, offices, residences and when we asked them to try to consolidate some of these so would be easier to secure they snapped back at us. We couldn't dictate to them where to go. They thought that they should have full-time security and at night they would have their social events, parties and all that. We in the military weren't doing that and they expected us to provide security for that. We got off in many ways with some of the NGOs, maybe many of the NGOs on a wrong foot. The civil military operation center worked well with them but they kind of viewed the uniformed guys in that sort of differently from the rest of us. There was a lot of tension. Bill Johnson and Bob Oakley helped a lot to smooth that over. I think the cultural differences with so many NGOs in there, and not just American NGOs but from all over, they had a sort of natural reticence to deal with the military and again, looking at us, in their view stealing the glory I think, didn't help. So over the seven months we made it work. We tried our best I think, on both sides to get the relationships going. In the aftermath of all that, we learned a lot and we agreed to sit down and kind of go over where the rubs were and try to work them out.

I came back from that and became the commanding general of the First Marine Expeditionary Force. We had started a program and we brought NGOs out there. We brought people from the political side, it was a program designed to sit down and talk through these kind of humanitarian missions, how we work better with each other, how we explain to each other our roles and coordinate all this and this was sort of burned into my soul from Provide Comfort and Restore Hope in these missions.

Q: You say you went back twice. What were they and when did you do that?

ZINNI: I'm back at Quantico in my job as the deputy and I'm watching. Now we have the attacks in June on the Pakistani group and the radio station and they go into a war mode. The UN is basically at war with the [inaudible] clan and others. And the casualties, the daily reporting. I talked to Bob Oakley. He was back here and we were both sick. It seemed like everything we had tried to build had just collapsed. I was down at, I had been selected for the grade of major general. I went to this course we had down at Maxwell Air Force Base where it's a joint course for two-stars. Newt Gingrich came down to speak to us and Gingrich had started to talk about Somalia. Somebody said, you know we have somebody here, and I happened to be sitting right next to him, who had been to Somalia so he said I'd like to talk to the guy. We struck up this conversation at the break and there was this long discussion about Somalia. And he was asking me a lot of questions. A few weeks later we had the Black Hawk Down incident. It seems to me October, you know, the incident with the Rangers and the special operations forces. I got a call

the night that that happened from Newt Gingrich.

Q: He was Speaker of the House or the majority leader?

ZINNI: No, he wasn't Speaker of the House. Yes. And he said to me, "Look, the president," it was President Clinton, "has called a meeting at the White House, bipartisan, to discuss the future course in Somalia." He said, "We're looking into options; one is to send a massive force in, tanks and everything else because Montgomery wanted tanks or to completely withdraw and pull out." He said, "What's your take?" I said, "Well, if those are the only two options on the table, pull out." I said, "If you just send all those forces and tanks, you're going to kill lots of Somalis and going to get more of our troops killed and you're not going to accomplish anything." So, I said, "That's not why you're there in the first place, you know, it's descended into this hail storm." And he said, "Well, what other option is there?" I said, "I believe you could fix it. I believe this thing got off because there was a misunderstanding and the policy at the UN but I think you could right the ship." And he said "Well, who can do that? I said, "Bob Oakley can do that. Bob is the guy the Somalis listen to and respect. He can go over there and get the shooting to stop and get it back onto some sort of political track and sort it out." He said, "Well, thanks."

The next night I'm at home and I get a call from the commandant of the Marine Corps and he says, "What do you know about Bob Oakley going to Somalia and Newt Gingrich recommending and all this stuff?" I said, "Well, I have to confess, Gingrich called me and I recommended this." He said, "Well", and this is going on midnight, "at six o'clock tomorrow morning you be at Andrews Air Force Base. We'll have the whole kit packed up because Oakley has requested that you go with him on this mission." Oh, God. I was at Quantico and I had to be up I was up packing my stuff, you know, and I show up at Andrews Air Force Base and there's Bob Oakley. In the end we got this Air Force C 21 revving its engines, ready to go and I got there and I said, "You know, what happened?" He said, "You got me into this mess and you're going with me."

So he had with him, too, a member of the National Security Council, Rand Beers and so there were the three of us. So I said to him, "What are you going to do?" "We're going to get in the airplane; we're going to head east and are going to figure out in the airplane what to do." So we went up in the airplane and Bob was thinking out loud and Bob was deciding, what do you want to have happen? We are going in there, so he decided number one, to get a cease fire. Number two, you try to make a connection with these people. Number three, you got to get them to release the American prisoner they had, this army warrant officer and we weren't sure we had all the American casualties accounted for and that sort of thing, to get that sorted out. And then, get an agreement to start a process, like a peaceful resolution process. So, you know, basically just to get things done.

So the first issue then became how do we contact Aidid? Bob decides we will land in Ethiopia -- Addis Ababa -- and Eritrea, Asmara, because the Ethiopians and the Eritreans have liaison with Aidid's people. They had a liaison team. So we use that as communication. So we stopped there shortly, met with the Prime Minister and President and they'd agreed if we contacted Aidid through their liaison and we told them they we were coming in, we had a point of contact there and we would set up a meeting and they would decide where to meet. They would not come to

any U.S. or UN facilities so we decided to meet at Bob Oakley's old sort of compound. There were some Somalis sort of taking care of it. There were no Americans because they had been pulled inside the wall. That would be the meeting place and we would ensure that it was safe.

We fly into Mogadishu and first stop at the airfield where the Somali people were, who had suffered all these casualties. So we meet with them and we tried to explain what our mission was. We wanted to be sure that if they see us talking to Aidid what we're trying to do is get their prisoner out. We were still trying to sort out if they had accounted for all the bodies. They had but they didn't realize it. There was some confusion.

General Garrison was really supportive, really felt the absolute need now that this was the right thing to do, so we had no problem there. That was important because that command was not under the UN or anything. That was a U.S. stovepipe command, that special operations unit.

So then we flew up to the old embassy where the UN was and we meet with Admiral Howe. Howe did not like us being there. He did not want us there, he did not approve of the mission. Aidid had declared a cease-fire; he would not declare a cease-fire. He said, "I won't engage in any more offensive operations, I won't start any, I'm not declaring a cease-fire. He is the enemy, I don't agree with you being here, we shouldn't be talking to him." So he and Oakley got into it a little bit. Oakley had to explain to him, "read my lips," because President Clinton says. It was pretty tense there.

So Oakley wanted me to go down and sort of work with the military. So I went down to see General Bir and General Montgomery and it was a strange military arrangement. Bier was the UN commander and Montgomery was his deputy in the UN but Montgomery was also the commander of the U.S. forces which were not under UN command. So really, within the UN structure you had two separate commands and then you had the special ops guys, which was a third military command, and then you had these two Marine amphibious units off the coast under a brigadier general which is not under anybody's command there that were making noises, and you had another joint force task force coming in which was another military command. These were not together. There were five military commands on the ground. One of the things Bob wanted me to do was make sure they understood we were going to go out and meet with Aidid at this place and then meet with his people initially, but we don't want any military operations going on. We want to ensure that this is truly going to be a cease-fire, whether it was undeclared but supported on one side and declared on the other side. So I went around to make sure these were all shut down and I was shocked to see there were five stovepipe military commands which didn't have much interaction with each other.

We went off to the first meeting. But Aidid decided not to come. We met with his chief lieutenants. We were dropped off out of this place and they came and met us there. We sat down and it was a really heated discussion. The UN had 80 some of their people on an island in the south as prisoners. They had had reports that these people were being mistreated, not bad, sick. We had promised to look into that. It turned out there was some truth to all that. Some of their key people, Osomanado, one of the chief lieutenants for Aidid and a number of others were being held there. They wanted to negotiate a prisoner swap; we'll give you one, we get our prisoners

back. Oakley said, “No negotiating for prisoners. I’ll tell you right up front the president will not do that. You have to release one officer to the command unconditionally.” So then they said, “Well,” they kind of offered this wink and a nod. “We won’t say it’s conditionally but you promise us you’ll look into these matters” and he said, “I can’t do that. I can’t in good faith say something because then it looks like and it becomes a negotiation for prisoners. We can’t do that.” He said, “All I can tell you is you have to release one officer, adhere to the cease-fire. When those things are done we’ll meet again.” So and I’m sure this angered him because this was a back-and-forth and they were calling their people and they finally left saying, “Okay. We’ll take it under consideration.”

So, we waited and waited. Finally we get the callback. They will offer they will release one officer and their first offer was to release them to Bob Oakley. Bob said, “No, no.” They said they won’t deal with the UN so he said, “You release them to the Red Cross.” So we make the arrangements to release them to the Red Cross. And so now you have this cease-fire declared by Aidid and now you have Aidid going to give one officer to the Red Cross.

We waited at the airfield for that announcement. We were sure that that was over. Bob says, “Let’s get out of here. We’re going to give it time to settle. We’re going to let this happen. We want to focus on what’s happening there. We don’t want to be visible in all this. Let this all take place and try to settle. It’s all positive information.” So we went back to Addis and a couple of other places and Eritrea, sort of reported back to the president and the prime minister. He communicated back to Washington and we then set up an agreement with Aidid to come back and meet with him. The second meeting would be with Aidid. This would be within a week or so, to give it some time to settle in, for the cease-fire to take hold.

We came back and now the arrangement was that we would be dropped in the center of Mogadishu and there would be the three of us and Aidid’s security people would come and pick us up and they would take us to his hideout. So this was one of these rides with all these technicals and guides through the streets and driving at 90 miles an hour. We came to Aidid’s headquarters and he is glad to see us and he’s embracing us. So we sat down and we started to talk about, you know, reestablishing the relationship we had and upgrading this thing, getting a cease-fire. Aidid basically agreed to all of it. The question became then the status of Aidid because the UN had a $25,000 reward on his head. We had a very emotional Congress and American population with our soldiers having been dragged through the street.

Aidid gave his side of the story how this all started and, I’ve got to tell you, there was a lot that I saw though Intel and the facts and Aidid’s side of the story that this wasn’t a deliberate ambush that started this all off. This was an over-eager UN operation that broke into the radio station. Word went out on the street that the radio station being shut down and attacked and they were doing this inspection. They had actually killed a couple of people and then you had this massive uprising of Aidid’s clan, sort of spontaneous. Aidid made a big mistake because once the spontaneity took over and they slaughtered these poor Pakistani soldiers who were monitoring the station, they went up onto the road as the Pakistani troops were coming out of the radio station and attacked them. Aidid, instead of trying to calm everything down and say let’s get this back to order, he decides to take credit for all this. This was a mistake he made to sort of pump

his chest out and that just compounds the problem, one mistake followed by another mistake, in my view.

The number of civilians killed was appalling. On the Black Hawk Down thing there were…

Q: We lost 18 men or something.

ZINNI: They killed about 300 militia but there was about another 800 or so civilian casualties and that was backed up by the hospitals and actually our own intelligence because I talked to senior intelligence officers out in Somalia.

This stuck in everybody's craw because Aidid was sort of left in limbo. There was no decision. He was neither accepted with open arms and forgiven nor was he pursued. On several of the meetings and such, he was actually moved by our people to meeting sites and everything else and people got really upset about it, so it was really a delicate situation. We came back the third time, the three of us, and Bob had set up a set of meetings in Addis Ababa. He began this sort of reconciliation and establishing all this, and Bob threw his heart and soul into this and now he was going to restructure the political part of this. My job in the coordination of the military was pretty much done so I bowed out of this. Then I discover that the president has decided to leave in six months and poor Bob has set up, has reestablished ourselves back to where we were, has made these long-term sort of commitments and plans and the president has decided to pull the chock with the U.S. forces. So Bob's whole effort had the rug pulled out from under it, it seemed to me. He went there and did everything the president asked, remarkably well and had put this process, the political process and the security situation, back the way it was and there was no intention to stop. I can understand that but Bob was not led to believe that. He was led to believe that he could fix it.

So I leave the scene. I now go to be commander of the First Marine Expeditionary Force And the United Nations in 1995 decides it's had it with the mission. It's pulling out. Now we are gone. We left after six months and the United Nations comes to the United States and says, "We can't pull out on our own." There were intelligence threats of surface to air missiles, handheld, so they couldn't pull out with their capability. They didn't have the amphibious capability to pull out over the beach so they had this Pakistani brigade, this Bangladeshi battalion and other odds and ends and their administrative staff. They were at the port and airfield but they couldn't get out. They appealed to the United States to withdraw and the Pentagon was just not up to this. General Shalikashvili had been burned by this before; he didn't want to go back in but they feel they have to do it. The president says we have to protect the UN. It's obviously a Marine mission because you've got to withdraw them over the beach, amphibious. You can't fly them out because they would be coming right up to the planes and shooting them down out of the air.

So the task of the First Marine Expeditionary Force is to be the combined joint task force to run this operation. In 1995, we had plenty of time to plan, so we planned it thoroughly. We went out on our ships. The Italians joined us, Italian Marines, and we had some Pakistani ships and some odds and ends of, the Brits provided a ship, but basically the forces on the ground were the Italian Marines and the U.S. Marines and Special Forces, U.S. Army Special Forces.

I went to Pakistan, Islamabad, to brief them because they were going to be the last to land troops on the beach. We had worked out in a military context a series of evolutions that are most difficult to perform. It was going to be a passage of lines at night, there was going to be an amphibious withdrawal in the middle of the night over the beach. I mean, these are the most difficult, complex things you can do. There were like nine evolutions that had to take place. In the military context these are the most complex things you could do. The Pakistanis were very good, very professional so we get there. Dan Simpson is now the U.S. representative with Somalia, the Oakley three times removed and we go see Aidid and Ali Mahdi and others and basically, I was there to tell them we were leaving. We don't want any trouble. Basically, we get concurrence from them that they aren't going to cause any trouble. Everybody's kind of sad this whole thing didn't work out but Aidid had said there are a lot of gangs that will not let you go easily. I guarantee you it won't be my clan. It might be some of the others. So we basically evacuate everything down, get the Pakistanis up. The UN logistic system was just terrible. They send some rickety old ship to pick up the Pakistanis. They had no food for them; the master of the ship was drunk so we got all held up. I had to get food for the Pakistanis. The master the ship got out. He almost ran aground which would have been disastrous. They had contractors in there, they had crooks, they had their own gang.

There was one contractor there that was a thug, he had these Khmer Rouge security guys, and had threatened the United Nations forces on the way out and had the military to deal with it. I had to go down and threaten him that if he caused any trouble, I'd sink his ships and knock out his planes and all and finally had him out of there.

The withdrawal had been going fine but the last night at the beach we had to come off in the middle of the night. We had these big berms around the beach, had two companies of marines and some point come down and get in our tractors and go to sea. In the course of the night, they just started to come in waves. They would attack our positions and we would mow them down. They would attack our positions, we would mow them down. We would try to broadcast, not to fire, not to shoot. But it didn't matter. They were held back. So the night was really heavy fire fights.

We finally got to the point that everything was off the beach except the tractors and we pulled back on signals, jumped in the tractors and were hoping we didn't get a RPG in the back and we made it out to the sea. And of course, it was midnight with heavy squalls and the tractor I'm on, catches on fire. So we start to drift out to the beach, another tractor tries to take us in tow, that tractor breaks down, so we go through this horrible night with all this stuff, trying to transfer troops on the small Navy safety boats, overloaded, salvage the tractors. So was about three o'clock in the morning when we got to the ship. We did not lose a man. We did not take any casualties and got everybody back to the ship and that was the last I saw of Somalia.

In the course of that, some of the militia leaders wanted to see me. I had set up at the airfield and they came in and these were guys I knew from all my past times there. We met on a hill overlooking the airfield and it was kind of a poignant moment because looking at all this, here's this airfield with all this stuff. They were leaving all this logistics and stuff they had and it was

just being looted and they were just saying, "My God, all the money and effort that went in, nothing out of this and nothing worth it." And so we were kind of sad about what had happened. But that was the end of it. We came off.

Q: As you came off, what were your lessons? What stuck in your mind?

ZINNI: A couple of things. One, you can't conduct limited missions in a tsunami. Once you intervene, you own the whole problem. It's sort of to paraphrase Secretary Powell's the Pottery Barn, it's not a matter that you just break it; if you touch it, you own it. If there was a metaphor for this the first days we were there, the French had set up positions in Mogadishu down by the port and they had a roadblock. They were stopping all the traffic because they wanted to screen it because it went through their lines and all to make sure there were no bad guys with guns. And a Somali bus came rumbling through, wouldn't stop for the French security. The French security opened fire and they killed and wounded a busload of people. We ended up taking these Somalis; there were some of them very severely wounded. We brought them out to one of our ships, a big amphibious ship that had an operating room and everything else because nothing else was sure to take care of them. These were people in very unstable conditions. They would be operated on and would be cared for. It came time for that ship to rotate and we were going to rotate them out and the ship couldn't move because we had these Somalis in there and the Somalis could not be transferred. There is no place ashore for them. They were too unstable to be transferred to another ship, so this big amphibious ship had to stay there until these Somalis were stabilized which was weeks and weeks later. To me that was kind of a metaphor for, "You touch it, you own it." You took this poor traumatized society under your wing and you thought you were just going to do a limited mission; you can't, once you took them in.

The second thing is we didn't have the doctrine and the coordination for this kind of mission. There were a lot of disparate parts here. There was a political element, a complex security element, you know, with all the coalition countries and the Somalis, there was the humanitarian element and there were all sorts of other elements; training police, reestablishing order, capacity building. We didn't know how to do that, how to coordinate and pull all that together. We were learning on the job. We were nation-building as much as we wanted not to be in that business and we didn't know how to rebuild societies and restructure nations, especially one in as bad shape as that was for so many reasons.

The other lesson was culturally, we didn't understand the culture. We didn't understand the Somalis. We didn't understand the clan system. I mean, Bob Oakley did but he was rare. Some of the decisions that get made don't bring into consideration the factors of culture, the factors of history. For example, we had the Nigerians on the ground. We put the Nigerians out, sort of, in positions. They were like magnets. They attracted every fire, every shooting spree in town. I couldn't figure out why. Later I found out Siad Barre was in next exile in Nigeria. They had granted exile so everybody was upset with the Nigerians. We didn't know that.

The Egyptians come in. The same thing happened to the Egyptians and it's because there was this myth that Boutros Boutros-Ghali when he was deputy foreign minister in Egypt had cut a deal with Siad Barre to transfer a million poor Egyptians down to the Juba Valley, very rich, and settle

them in there and take out the Somalis and this myth about Egypt and everything else. Everybody believed it.

So you have these cultural and historical and political issues that you weren't aware of, didn't get into your mix in terms of your intelligence. There were a whole bunch of things like that that we didn't know that would have made you do things differently had you understood them.

Q: Admiral Howe as often I have heard people talk about it say he was the guy that got us into this. What was your impression of Admiral Howe?

ZINNI: First of all, I liked him personally. He is a true American, a patriot. Second of all, he's one of the most brilliant men I have ever met. You talk about an intellect. I had served with him before and had great respect for him. I think he was in a third world environment that he didn't understand and he came in with a very noble objective in mind. I think he really saw that he was going to eliminate the warlords and push to reestablish Somalia in some sort of idealistic manner, where Oakley was a realist. You want stability; you want the best you can get. Let's get it stabilized. Don't try to shoot for the moon and create something that isn't going to be possible. The difference I saw from Howe was a very American approach.

Q: I was going to say it was very, very American.

ZINNI: Yes. In effect, we're going to get Iraqis Jeffersonian democracy. It was well-intentioned. You cannot knock him for his enthusiasm, for his intellect or his hard work, for his dedication. I just think he, from the first, didn't get it. When we tried to explain it to him, he dismissed us in many ways. There was some friction in that he wanted us to stay around. The combined task force was called UNITAF. He wanted to keep UNITAF under the UN command, to be transferred to him. What he didn't understand is that DOD and the secretary of defense and the president wanted us out. They wanted to turn this back to the UN. They didn't want this to be a U.S. mission and he, I think, blamed us for that.

Q: Almost on a personal level, but here you were dealing with the Clinton administration early on and there had been the problem of Clinton avoiding service in Vietnam and his "Don't ask, don't tell" about homosexuals and all in the service.

ZINNI: That was in the beginning and then of course, all the way through my CENTCOM time to 2000. Although he didn't come in with much understanding of the military, he was very interested in the military. He wanted to know about the military. I briefed him on strikes in Iraq, I briefed him on a number of things when I was CENTCOM and I always found he had this real thirst and curiosity for, "Explain to me how this mission goes, explain to me what you are doing, why are you doing that?" and very much in detail, not to micromanage but to understand. The other thing that impressed me was he got it. He was a quick take.

I think in Somalia two things happened with the administration. They were handed this. They didn't get into this on their own. It was given to them. I think they embraced it. I think they saw because, when they came in now in January, we were doing good out there. You know, it was the

CNN effect that got us in there. This was Christiane Amanpour amongst the stick people and suddenly we are feeding them. This was a good mission and it was done for all the right reasons by President Bush. We had no political interest there we were protecting, no political gain. He made this decision after he was defeated in the election and I think the Clinton administration said this is kind of a signature thing of that we want to do. This is great. We are going to use our power for good and they embraced Somalia and I think in many ways didn't understand what they were getting into. In many ways I think Boutros-Ghali trapped them into some things that they may be any savvier or more experienced or maybe the Clinton administration later on would have been more careful about. They saw all good in this mission and when you were on the ground, you just saw that this was, as I mentioned, was fragile but not only fragile, not only complex but had the potential to go south. It was always a heartbeat away from things like eventually happened. A miscalculation, a misunderstanding and we could have a problem. So I think there was a degree of naïveté, there was a degree of idealism in their approach. There was a certain aspect of being driven by the desire to want to use our power for good. I think he, if anything marked his administration, it was this engagement and reaching out and this sort of fit the mold. And he was burned by it and was burned by the experience. We all were. I think later on, as he said, it affected his decision on Rwanda and Burundi and he regretted that but the Somalian debt came in, Congress beat him up on it, Aspin, secretary of defense, had to resign over it.

Q: We were talking to Milosevic about Bosnia. The Serbs used to sort of taunt some of our people by using Somalia saying that we couldn't take casualties and therefore we wouldn't commit ourselves and I think, you know this whole thing made it Vietnam tainted.

ZINNI: It goes even deeper than that. Beirut, it's a, you know, the USS Cole gets hit, we leave Yemen. The Khobar Towers gets bombed, we pull out of the eastern provinces of Saudi Arabia. I mean, there are many examples where we take a lick and the political decision is to immediately withdraw or desist. I think, my personal view is, if it's one of those missions where we have been attacked or we've clearly been wronged and the American people have a clear understanding of why we are there, they will endure the casualties for the duration. In Afghanistan the Americans will stay in Afghanistan as long as it takes because it is Al Qaeda, it's the 9/11 perpetrators.

When you get involved in something, let's take Somalia, the initial mission was humanitarian. But suddenly the Americans wake up some months later and it has shifted now to hunt the warlords and go into the streets and what's this about? It went from a humanitarian mission to some sort of going after, anti-warlord, in a remote part of the world. In Beirut, we had Marines sitting there with no real purpose. Iraq, we go in on a premise that later is proven false, it's WMD (weapons of mass destruction). I think people could misjudge the American people. If the mission is clear to the American people and the mission is in a sense where we have been wronged or we're clearly on the moral high ground and it's vital to our interests, I think the American people will gut it out. They're not going to gut it out on a vague missions or missions that are based on false premises that are later discredited.

Q: This goes to World War II. The Japanese certainly, and the Germans did too, felt we were too soft. Obviously it proved wrong.

What was the feeling you are getting about Boutros Boutros-Ghali and the leadership at the UN at this particular time?

ZINNI: Terrible. Terrible reputation even dealing with his representative on the ground he was very difficult to deal with. Oakley would go in there, we wanted a restructured police force, we wanted UN help, and all you have to do is to commit to do it. You know, reestablishing the police force, we will stay here, and we will be part of it. They wouldn't touch it. They wouldn't do anything. But they would dictate things like it would be, we will never take over the police if there is a Somali in charge. That's why I became head of the police force. Why not have a Somali in charge?

Q: Speaking as a former INR (Bureau of Intelligence and Research) Horn of Africa analyst, this is back in the '60s, but the police force was the one sort of major force that had a real reputation.

ZINNI: And we had that. The Italians were willing to provide them with equipment, uniforms, we had people who were willing to train them. We set this all up for the UN. The other thing they would do is these ridiculous things like try to tell us, we called ourselves "combined task force." It had nothing to do with the UN, that's a military term. A combined task force is a task force made up of coalition countries. He said, "You can't use that term, combined task force." "We can't?" "No. You must call yourself "unified task force, UNITAF." Well, you know a lot of these things… But, we didn't want to do anything to upset the apple cart because we wanted to get this thing passed over to the UN. So we called ourselves UNITAF.

There were these ridiculous dictates that would come out from him and Boutros-Ghali. The UN forces were on the ground in April, early April. The UN command element was there but they wouldn't take command. What we ended up with is the most ridiculous situation in the world. Bob Johnston and his staff, we had no more UNITAF forces, they were all gone. We commanded the UN forces. Their staff was there but their staff would not take command. They were sitting next to us. I had the UN operations officer next to me, he had the UN commander next to him but they refused to take command. For six weeks our staff commanded the UN forces and had the responsibility and I think had we not pushed the issue in Washington, they were perfectly happy at that there. They were there to sort of kibitz like advisers. We had no forces, yet we were commanding their forces. It was the most ridiculous situation.

Q: Was this coming from the top?

ZINNI: It was Boutros-Ghali. And again a little bit of criticism of our own. I don't know why we weren't in their face in New York on this stuff or calling for a resolution on Chapter VII or something. We, maybe because the administration was new, but Boutros-Ghali played us like a fine violin. He extracted the demand for the U.S. military to provide the logistic support and command, to provide the reaction force, the major reaction force. You know, he set all these conditions out. If he hadn't finally exhausted the president's patience, he would have continued on like that.

Q: Did Madeleine Albright as our U.S. ambassador to the UN come out there at all or not?

ZINNI: No. President Bush came out. It was the last thing he did before the inauguration. I can't think of in our time there any senior visitor. It might have happened during UN time.

Q: How about Congress? Were they coming around and looking?

ZINNI: Jack Markell was out there. Right after he was out there, as soon as that Black Hawk Down thing, he was out there the next day. We met with him. When we landed at the airport he was already there. He was with the special ops guys.

We saw dignitaries from the different units. We even had Kraus, who was the NATO military committee head came down. Why? There weren't any German troops there. The only NATO were the French and Canadian but he came down to visit. We had everything from presidents to senior officials from some of contributing countries that came down.

TIMOTHY MICHAEL CARNEY
Political Advisor, UN Mission
Somalia (1993-1994)

Ambassador Timothy Michael Carney was born in Missouri in1944 and graduated from MIT in 1966. Carney studied abroad in France for a year before joining the Foreign Service. In the Foreign Service Carney served abroad in Vietnam, Lesotho, Cambodia, Thailand, South Africa, Sudan, Indonesia, and as ambassador to Sudan and Haiti. Ambassador Carney also spent time working with the Cox Foundation, USUN and the NSC. Carney was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: Explain what TIC means.

CARNEY: TIC is the "time in class" rule. I had been regarded as having been too long in class at the first level of Senior Foreign Service rank. Those are the two things I can remember. Then, Peter Tarnoff, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, asked me to come have a chat. I did. He suggested that it would be enormously useful if I would go to Mogadishu. The American who was the Special Representative of the Secretary General had been Brent Scowcroft's deputy on the previous National Security Council staff, Admiral Jonathan T. Howe. He was in serious need of political advice. The UN apparently didn't agree. The aptly named James Jonah was the relevant Under Secretary General, and he didn't want another American in the mission in Mogadishu. That had to be fought all the way up to (Secretary General) Boutros Ghali before I was finally processed by the UN bureaucracy. I arrived in Mogadishu in early December of 1993.

I stopped in London on the way because all of this to-ing and fro-ing with the UN had given me

about 6 weeks to actually learn something about Somalia, as incredible as that might sound. I read a number of books and discovered that the grand old man of Somali studies was Ioan Lewis, not to be confused with the Islamic scholar whose name is Bernard Lewis. I called either SOAS or LSE and they were delighted to give me his home phone number. No such thing as privacy in the UK, thank you, except if you try to put salacious photographs of somebody in the newspapers, no matter how prominent they might be, as Fergie found out one time.

I called him up, said I could stop through London. He was delighted, gave me the name of the tube stop and walking directions to his house. Indeed, I did stop through London. I went over and had a terrific interview with someone who actually knows Somalia and was appalled at the direction the UN mission had taken, the transformation of it from a humanitarian mission, UNOSOM I, United Nations Operation in Somalia, to UNOSOM II, the latter being what we're doing in Afghanistan now, and what we hope to do in Iraq, which is to say, nation building.

In fact, he bustled away, made some French press coffee, which if I can't get espresso is my next favorite, brought some Scottish shortbread out, and the two of us sat down. He looked me in the eye and said, "You know, Somalia is a contest between American high tech and Somalia low cunning." He left no doubt about who was winning. He was right. When I got there, it was a zoo. The headquarters of the mission was the former U.S. embassy compound that Jim Bishop had so belatedly evacuated during the Gulf War. Everything had been ripped out and then reinstalled, with trailers put in as modular housing for the UN staff. Howe basically didn't want me there, that was pretty clear. April Glaspie he was willing to tolerate because she's not only an Arabist, she was a former ambassador. I had never been an ambassador, and I was a male State Department type, which is generally anathema to a certain mindset in the military.

He basically wanted me to take over running the pitifully inadequate information education effort that the UN had going there. They didn't even have their own radio station. This is in a country which essentially lived by oral tradition, poetry, and being articulate and fast on your feet verbally. A remarkable lack of comprehension of what Somalia was all about- Quite apart from the chutzpah up front, in your face, confrontational Somali national character. An amazing place.

Howe was at the end of his string there and demonstrated that even a flag officer in the armed forces of the United States does not have to be a leader. I can remember one 5 minute discussion in a staff meeting that he chaired on what to do with used sandbags. The man found his horizon so circumscribed as to be bounded by used sandbags, a reflection of his own personality as well as the situation.

Q: When you arrived there, why were we there and where were we, the West, in the scheme of things?

CARNEY: In a nutshell, the death of the dictator, Mohamed Said Barre ultimately caused Somalia to fall apart. It fell apart into its components, and its components can best be described by a Somali proverb: "Me against my brother, my brother and I against our cousins, we and our cousins against" and so on and so forth. Your atomic unit was the subclan. It was the family really, but the subclan was the real nuclear unit of Somali society. One of the largest subclans,

extending into clans were the Habr Gedir, of which your late Mohamed Aidid's son is the most prominent figure in the Mogadishu area of Somalia today. There are about 6-12 larger clans like the Habr Gedir and they tend to be geographically based. They have been at war with one another throughout the entire historical period and probably well beyond. The drought and looming famine of the late '80s along with Siad Barre's death caused an implosion in Somali society that essentially resulted in military action by those clans that had the wherewithal to acquire guns. That's what the United Nation's first mission, that was a humanitarian mission, stepped into. It did the job. People did not starve to death in wholesale quantities.

Then there was pressure - and I cannot recall why, partly because I was in Cambodia at the time with UNTAC - to transform the humanitarian mission into one of nation building, presumably so that Somalia would have the capacity to deal with such emergencies in the future. It wasn't done, probably could not be done. Somalia remains to this very day a nation - in Somalia, everybody speaks Somali, most everybody is a Muslim, but it's not a state. There is no national government. It's also divided into at least two fragments: Somaliland, which the British had under their aegis; and Somalia, which was Italian Somalia until given over to the British after one of the world wars. The third Somali entity is Djibouti, which is made up of Somalis but very heavily under French influence. In fact, the French ambassador who was in Haiti when I was there is currently ambassador in Djibouti.

Q: When you arrived, what was the conventional wisdom? Did you talk to the State Department? Were they saying, "We've got to get the hell out of there?" Where were we at this time?

CARNEY: When I accepted Peter Tarnoff's invitation, I went down and essentially put myself in the hands of the Somali Working Group, which was under the aegis of David Shinn. That working group let me know that we were at the near end of UNOSOM II. This was a month and a half, maybe two, after Blackhawk Down, August of 1993. There was an effort by the U.S. military to capture a number of Aidid's lieutenants, Mohamed Farrah Aidid having been deemed responsible for the death of a number of UN troops who had tried and failed to capture his clandestine radio station. Aidid knew he needed a radio station. Why the UN couldn't figure it out that the UN needed one, too was beyond me at least until I got there and met some of the people in charge.

The effort to capture Aidid's troops went badly awry. There was inadequate sharing of knowledge about the operation. There was no serious rescue force prepared to go in on the ground if they had to. Helicopters were shot down by rocket propelled grenades, either B40 or B41 model as the Vietnamese named them or RPG2 or RPG 7 if you want the NATO nomenclature. The air was filled with gloom. There was a broad and correct assessment that the UNOSOM II mission had failed, and that that failure would be sealed by pulling out with its tail between its legs in the not too distant future. And that is what happened.

Q: This was a UN effort?

CARNEY: Yes, but it was a UN effort with a difference. It was one of those United Nations hybrids that had a major U.S. military component much in the way of the subsequent mission to

Haiti which went off in '94 and then became blessed by the UN. The U.S. military was in the UN nominally under the command of a Turkish Force Commander, a general officer, but, in fact, answerable to Washington with a number of stovepiped - a jargon term which means operations that were conducted in secrecy from other elements of the U.S. military or diplomatic efforts, much less from the UN itself. It simply was a hopeless mishmash of incompetent people engaged in a combination of murder and slapstick.

Q: Were these incompetent because of the situation or were they just incompetent people for the task at hand?

CARNEY: It was both. The situation was inherently not understood and thus was not being adequately addressed, and the people in the field certainly in the leadership just simply weren't up to figuring things out and grasping what to do. The political level in the U.S. was also fairly clueless.

Q: What did Tarnoff tell you? Was this a thing of "Clean up the mess and get the hell out" or was it "Carry on?"

CARNEY: To the extent I remember, it was not very specific, but it was strongly put to me that Admiral Howe had bad instincts and worse judgment, and that I ought to be able to help provide a bit of a rudder in the right directions. What were those directions? I do not remember anything specific.

Q: By this time, you had the distinct impression that there was no confidence in Admiral Howe?

CARNEY: Very well put.

Q: Hadn't he worked in the State Department?

CARNEY: He had been the head of the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. They should have figured it out then.

Q: How did you and Admiral Howe interface at that time?

CARNEY: Because of having dealt with so many UN people, he thought I was there to get myself a chunk of the action, be "in charge" of something, and "be" rather than "do," which is a classic UN phenomenon, someone who wants to be at a higher rank with a title rather than to do anything that might expose them to criticism should it not work. Thus, very few UN bureaucrats will take any risk. He didn't seem to understand that I didn't want to be there at all, but as I was there, I would be giving my best advice on a whole range of subjects about which I had some considerable experience, notably including information but also I had been in Vietnam. I don't think he had.

Q: Was April Glaspie there at the time?

CARNEY: No, April had gone. She was at that point director of Southern African Affairs.

Q: Were there any people within that UN structure, American or others, who you felt knew what was happening?

CARNEY: Yes, indeed, there were a fair number of people. There was also a U.S. mission there that had seen Bob Gosende come and go, a former career officer at the Information Service who was ambassador and then left. He had gone, and he was replaced by an officer who has just retired but who's working with AID now, Richard Bogosian. Howe was backed up by a pretty capable staff, a UN information officer who had come out of retirement, an early phenomenon in the nature of "when actually employed." There was a more junior officer, a fellow who is now DCM in Kampala, who was nominally attached to the UN but they wouldn't pay for him, named Don Teitlebaum. Don had a really good feel for what was going on on the ground. There was also a UN political officer named Ken Menkhaus. Ken knew very well what was going on. There was a Nigerian who seemed to have a clue what was going on. Shortly after I arrived, Bangladesh's former ambassador to the U.S., Ataul Karim, arrived to take the job that Tarnoff said I would be taking, the senior political advisor to Jonathan Howe. Karim you'll recall from my comments on the Cambodian days where he was the non-Cambodian or French-speaking head of the political element of the Special Representative of the Secretary General's office in Phnom Penh. Karim and I to this day get along well. He is very low key. He's smart. But the situation was clearly not going anywhere. In fact, it didn't.

In early February or late January 1994, a CNN report noted the UN spokesman had said that Admiral Howe would be leaving. This was Admiral Howe's first intimation of that. Rather than play games, he told New York that he was going to leave the end of the first week of February. I decided I had therefore ended my mandate from Under Secretary Tarnoff, and I left the day after Howe did. The entire UN mission pulled out within a couple of months.

Q: Were you talking to our military guys there? What were they saying?

CARNEY: I decided that there was a disconnect between the UN Special Representative's Office and staff and the U.S. commander, so I went over and chatted with him, a two star. I'm an Army brat, so I can talk military if I have to, especially with all those additional years in Vietnam and Cambodia when the shooting war was on. It was quite a good chat. It was very candid for the first chat. It's very difficult to say some things. But it was clear that the military seemed to believe it was in a no-win, hopeless situation, and I would guess that was partly as a result of what was coming out of backchannel from the Pentagon on the political side in the U.S. Mr. Clinton was...

Q: He inherited the Bush war and was sort of trapped with it.

CARNEY: Yes, as he inherited Jean Bertrand Aristide in exile in Washington from Haiti.

I tried a couple of things. One of them was, there was clearly a need to make some points in the U.S. I tried to prepare for Howe a set of talking points to use with the editorial board of the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* when he was back over Christmas of 1993, and urged that

he try to get on NPR and similar radio programs, which he did. He did not need to be sold on that. He just needed to be pushed in that direction a little bit. The man had no judgment in how to do foreign affairs. For example, there is on the Christian side, the Sermon on the Mount in the 8 or 9 Beatitudes. On the Islamic side, there is a very similar set of prescriptions. For example, among the Beatitudes is: "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God." Well, if you look in Sura 2, the Cow, of the Koran, you will find about Verse 12 the same thing, but cast in the other direction. The quote is something to the effect of, "There are those who call themselves peacemakers, but it is really they who are the mischief makers on this earth." Several stanzas further down, you come across, "And woe unto them." It seemed to me that in the Christmas season, this was a perfect message that could be put in Admiral Howe's remarks for the New Year to the Somali audience. He wouldn't touch it with a 10 foot pole. "Can't have Christians quoting Muslim scripture." What nonsense.

Q: In a way, it was frustrating but at the same time I would think that you would feel there was nothing you could really do there anyway. Did you feel something could have been done?

CARNEY: I didn't know. The answer is, you never will unless you try. You put that in suspension in the back of your mind and go for it. We did do a couple of good trips upcountry. I worked closely with a fellow who was Special Forces, going off to be the commander in Fort Lewis, and with a fellow who was a nephew or a grand nephew of a former Secretary of State, Stetinnius, who was working on a program that has since become installed all around the world, a sort of ICITAP improvement of the criminal justice system, both by upgrading the police and trying to upgrade the courts. We tried to help broker a relationship in Belet Weyne, where the Germans had succeeded the Italians as the main UN force. Then we were in Baidoa and one other place which I cannot recall the name of, but it was essentially pastoral. Remarkable. It enabled me to acquire some frankincense which proved to be great stocking stuffers for Christmas of 1994. I couldn't find any myrrh. Frankincense is essentially a gum Arabic, and is readily available.

I got to know Somalis. If you understand what they are, you can deal with them. You make the wrong assumptions and you can be dead. Very interesting place. But just simply the West, and certainly the U.S., did not understand it well enough to make a decision to engage. That was a mistake. That was bad policy.

Q: You mentioned that you had picked up the feeling that there are an awful lot of time servers in the UN going for the position as opposed to the job.

CARNEY: Yes, that's true. That began to change as you increased the tempo of field missions where, if you didn't produce results, people noticed it. But in the period of most of the UN's history, with the deadlock between the U.S. and the USSR over a number of issues, it did not pay to be a UN bureaucrat who raised your head too high. There were numbers and numbers recruited who learned that lesson. Particularly if you were from the Third World you lived fat, you did little, tried to draw as little attention to yourself as possible except where you would look good rather than necessarily be good. I ran into that on the Cambodia mission. A remarkable bunch of incompetents sent out from the UN headquarters.

Q: You left in early '94. There is always a taint of anybody who's been involved in essentially a failed mission. Did you find this?

CARNEY: I didn't. I immediately, thanks to April Glaspie, went to Lakhdar Brahimi as Special Political Advisor in the UN observer mission in South Africa (UNOMSA) for the elections that brought Mandela to power. I met a number of characters who will figure in our subsequent chats. Susan Rice was on the NSC staff and became Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. I got to know a number of UN people who I've stayed close to as well a seeing again Reg Austin, who had been in Cambodia as the head of the electoral unit. He was head of the electoral monitoring aspect of the UN mission in South Africa. He was a Zimbabwean. Interesting mission.

RICHARD W. BOGOSIAN
Coordinator, U.S. Liaison Office
Mogadishu (1993-1994)

Ambassador Richard Bogosian was born on July 18, 1937, in Boston, Massachusetts. He studied history at Tufts University and graduated from University of Chicago Law School. In 1962 he entered the Foreign Service and his career has included positions in Niger Republic, Chad, Somalia, Sudan and Rwanda. Ambassador Bogosian was interviewed by Vladimir Lehovich in 1998.

BOGOSIAN: Now what had happened here was that on October 3, 1993, in a battle in Mogadishu, I think it was 18 Americans were killed, and what's more, one of our soldiers was dragged through the streets, and there was this awful picture of a captured American with just this look of fear in his eyes. They were rangers that had dropped from helicopters, and in a word they were slaughtered, in Mogadishu. And this occurred at a time when there was growing pressure for us to do something about Bosnia, but in fact we had not made a commitment to go in. And just around the same time, the USS Harlan County had gone with troops to Haiti and there was a demonstration on the pier, and it was turned around rather than go. And so all of a sudden it looked like the United States, in Nixon's words, was "a helpless pitiful giant."

Now the way that affected me was in the aftermath of the debacle -

Q: *Dick, can we just go back for a sec. Can you, in a couple of thoughts, sketch in what had been going on in Somalia until October?*

BOGOSIAN: All right. What had happened in Somalia was that in 1991 the régime of Siad Barre, the dictator who had been ruling Somalia, collapsed. In effect, there was a civil war, but two things happened in Somalia, the first of which was the civil war, to use that phrase, somewhat like Chad, deteriorated into numerous militias led by warlords. It wasn't just group A against group B; it was numerous groups of warlords fighting each other with a kind of

kaleidoscopic set of alliances. It was never clear who would be with whom the next day. Among the things they did was to, in effect, steal emergency food aid, so that it never got to the people who needed it. And by 1990-1991, there was this just incredible famine throughout much of Somalia. And the pictures were on TV. In fact, I was in Chad at the time - this was around the time of Desert Storm - and I said to myself, I'm glad I'm not in Somalia.

But the humanitarian relief community was beginning to put pressure, and I distinctly remember one of these people on televisions saying, "Why doesn't the United States do something?" meaning military action. So somewhat to everyone's surprised, President Bush authorized the deployment of troops to Somalia.

Q: *When was that?*

BOGOSIAN: Well, the election was in 1992, and this was after he was defeated.

Q: *This was when he was a lame duck.*

BOGOSIAN: Yes.

Q: *So this was probably in late 1992.*

BOGOSIAN: Right. He went to Mogadishu at Christmas time to visit the troops. Now the thing to note is that prior to Siad Barre's overthrow, or prior to the collapse, the country had been at war in one way or another, and by the time Bush made his move, it wold have been at least a year since there was anarchy in the country. And what had happened was that, on the one hand, there was this terrible, terrible famine - which wasn't the first time in Somalia, but it was very bad, one of the worst anyone had ever seen in Africa - but the point was, if you couldn't control these warlords, particularly Aidid and Ali Mahdi - they were rivals but between them they essentially ruled Mogadishu, which was the main port and the main airport of the country - then no matter how much food aid you gave, it never got to the people who needed it. So the judgment was made that if you sent a military force, and it was international –

Q: - *which would escort food aid* -

BOGOSIAN: - which would escort food aid, then you could feed the people and so forth.

Q: *Right.*

BOGOSIAN: Now of course one of the new things was the TV cameras followed it every step of the way.

Q: *That's good background.*

BOGOSIAN: So by, say, spring of 1993, the way to resolving the famine had essentially been worked out, and indeed we were ready to pull our troops out and to turn it over to a UN

organization. Now the UN operation for Somalia is referred to as UNOSOM. The initial group had no real political agenda. It essentially was there to get the food to the people who needed it. Under UNOSOM, there was this sense that something should be done to resolve the political problems. Now there's been a lot of debate about that. It's been called a mistake, but the idea behind it was until and unless you work out a political settlement, you have no long-term solution to the humanitarian problem, and of course that's bedeviled everybody ever since, because that has not happened yet.

One of the things that happened under UNOSOM was that a Pakistani contingent, in June, I think it was, of '93, was slaughtered by Aidid's people, and the U.S. took the position that that couldn't be permitted to stay, and so Aidid was depicted, essentially, as enemy number one. He was the kind of person that it was easy to demonize. They referred to him as having a crocodile smile - i.e., the smile was utterly mirthless. And it was Aidid that they were trying to either capture or subdue when, in fact, that mission on the 3rd went terribly wrong.

Q: *We were succeeding in making Aidid a national hero, in my opinion.*

BOGOSIAN: Well, I think that overstates it, but he told us later that they never dreamed that they could win a military victory against the United States. And in our naïveté, I guess we had problem of hubris.

Q: *We let them do it.*

BOGOSIAN: Well, these fellows were put into an extremely difficult position. If you fly over where they were, it's very congested, very compacted, utterly hostile, and all the rest. And I was told that there were other aspects of the mission, such as the fact that they had done it several times. That's the kind of mission you do once for its surprise value. You don't do it five, six times. In any event, it was a political debacle, and so in Washington's wisdom they decided to do three things in October of 1993. They decided to replace Bob Gosende, who had been the head of our diplomatic presence there - what we referred to as the U.S. Liaison Office-Mogadishu, USLO, because there was no government to which we were accredited, but otherwise it was essentially the U.S. embassy. And indeed, we were on the grounds of our embassy, which was 80 acres, but it was also where the UN was headquartered as well. I was asked to replace him. Also Jim Dobbins, who had been at one time our ambassador to the European Union and deputy chief of mission in Bonn, was asked to become the coordinator for Somalia in Washington itself. And Bob Oakley was asked to do some diplomatic legwork in Somalia - that is, he didn't live there, but he would come and go.

That phone call to Tarnoff, of course, was asking me to go. And I looked at my wife - this was before we actually reached Tarnoff, when I knew that's what they were going to ask me - and I said, "What should I do?" because going to a war zone was not exactly what I had bargained for. She said, "You'll have to make that decision." And I said to myself, I didn't fight in Vietnam, and I was too young for Korea, and this is the first time in 30 years that they've actually asked me to do something. So I said, "I'll go." And it was the first time in our married life that we were separated for any length of time. So I got dressed and went into the Department and had my

meeting with Tarnoff. And I said, "What is it you want me to do?" And I later had a similar conversation with Dick Clarke on the NSC staff. And what Tarnoff said, in so many words, was, "In the aftermath of the debacle of October 3rd, we're going to pull our troops out, but we're going to do it gradually, and they're scheduled to be out by the end of March. And so what we want you to do is sort of to oversee that process as our chief diplomat in residence in Mogadishu." And the other thing he said was that these events have badly damaged the reputation of the United Nations, and he said, "You should do what you can to prop up the standard of the UN." I said, "Well, how long do you want me there?" and he said, "Well, if you could stay into next summer, that would be fine with us." Now what Clarke added was a much more political thing. He said, "No more embarrassments, no more surprises." So that was my *de facto* mandate in going out to Mogadishu.

Q: *Can I ask, on that latter point, "no embarrassments, no surprises," what did that mean?*

BOGOSIAN: Well, I think what it meant was no serious damage to the U.S. military, no defeats.

Q: *Had there been preventable embarrassments and surprises before?*

BOGOSIAN: Well, I don't know. I'll tell you of an incident a little later on which could have easily... I mean, we were always on the edge. We were within sniper range of Mogadishu, but I think if you could let me go on, you might want to ask that question a little later.

So, without really knowing what I was getting into, I agreed to go to Somalia. It took a couple of weeks to actually get me there, and I believe it was the 9th of November by the time I got there.

Q: *And you went as ambassador, Dick, is that correct?*

BOGOSIAN: Well, I went as chief of mission, in the sense that they called me Ambassador, I was the chief of mission, I had all the kind of authority an ambassador has, but strictly speaking, I was the coordinator of the U.S. Liaison Office, or something like that.

Now this was a very brief but extremely intense assignment, and it was unlike anything I'd ever done. And I literally didn't know what I was getting into, and so the first thing was to get to Nairobi and then get on an attaché C-12 to Mogadishu. I had been there twice while I was director of AFE, but I really couldn't remember it very well. We landed at the airport, which is on the beach, and all of a sudden I realized I was in a highly military environment, not just our troops - we had 20,000 in Somalia - but all kinds of other troops. There were men with machine guns pointing in each direction protecting me. I immediately had a helmet and a flak jacket put on me, and the next thing I knew I was in a helicopter and we were going to the compound. Well, this was pretty exciting, and like I say, I had never done anything quite like that. But that turned out to be the way it was, and after a while I got pretty used to it. I had an Air Force officer on my staff. I said, "When would it be all right to take a helicopter down to the airport or to take a C-12 to Nairobi?" He said, "Anytime you want, Sir."

Q: *Good, good.*

BOGOSIAN: So when I got there, it was the largest deployment of U.S. troops in the world at that time, and among the people there was General Montgomery, who was the deputy commander of UNOSOM and the head of the U.S. forces, which for legal reasons was not part of it because they had to be under U.S. command. The actual commander was a Turkish person. The other key person, who was the senior UN person there, was Admiral Jonathan Howe. Now Jonathan Howe is an American, and he was at one time the head of the Political-Military Bureau, but in Mogadishu he was the senior UN man.

Q: *He had been deputy chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as I recall.*

BOGOSIAN: Could be, yes. So there was no question that the Americans were kind of running the place.

Q: *My recollection was that Jonathan Howe was often very strongly at odds with U.S. policy when he was over there.*

BOGOSIAN: I was going to phrase that somewhat differently.

Q: *That was simply my recollection from reading the newspapers.*

BOGOSIAN: Well, what I was going to say is... This was, again, like I say, unlike anything I've ever done. Now since then, of course, we've had the different operations in Haiti and Bosnia and so forth, and maybe there's more institutional understanding of how this is done, but back then this was a rather unusual arrangement. Now in Washington, Dobbins had the job of coordinating everything, and to tell you the truth, I didn't get too involved in that, but in the field, what you have is a situation where an ambassador does not have authority over troops that are under the command of a theater command. So certainly Montgomery didn't answer to me, but as a practical matter, I looked to him for advice on the military situation, and he looked to me for advice on the diplomatic situation, and we worked very closely together.

Q: *You got along well with him.*

BOGOSIAN: Absolutely. I found him to be one of the finest people I ever came across. Now the interesting thing is Montgomery was supervising other generals who didn't have as complete an understanding of the political realities as Montgomery did. Now I may have mentioned previously that in a place like Niamey, it wasn't me against the AID director; it was the AID director and I against AID Washington. So often it was Montgomery and I who understood a situation, whereas his generals didn't; and Montgomery had to kind of sit on them, and occasionally they wanted to end-run him and talk to me. And to give you a specific example, we had some really heavy equipment there. We had Abrams tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles, and these things can blow you to kingdom come, and there was one general there, whose name I forget, who said, "All right, you got a problem with Aidid blocking this road? We'll open it up for you." And Montgomery said, "Wait a minute," and he referred to collateral damage, because essentially they were talking about the equivalent of a city, not a street so much as an avenue.

But, you know, in my continuing education, I had never been exposed to this before. We actually sat down and you had to do military planning. The embassy compound was separated from Aidid's neighborhood by a field. And we had what are called "fast Marines," 40 of them, who were under my command, there to protect us, and Aidid's people could shoot at us. And there was one incident while I was there where they came to me, and I forget the specifics, but for the first time in my life I was asked to issue an order to kill. And I said, in so many words, "If the situation is as you describe it, and you need to, go ahead, shoot to kill." And for our garden-variety Foreign Service officer who's never been in the military, that's a rather sobering responsibility.

What I would say is when I got there in those early days of November and December, there were sort of three or four things going on. For one thing, just living in trailers, where most people had one room and shared a bath in something that looked like a mobile home - our officer were in trailers; we were working essentially 18 hours a day; we were still very newsworthy, CNN and ABC News and all the rest - to be just put into that was quite a startling experience. On the other hand, I had a superb staff and a group of people who had been there through some of the more difficult days when mortars were being fired. Now while I was there that never happened, but it was only days before I got there that it did happen, and it was also understood that it could happen at any time. So it was a highly dangerous environment, although I never really had any problem. I think I was in more danger in N'Djamena than I was in Mogadishu, and one of the things I noted when I got there... Of course, the other thing was this highly military environment, with AFN, armed forces radio, we had Brown and Root essentially doing the catering, and-

Q: *Excuse me, Brown and Root doing the catering?*

BOGOSIAN: Yes, they're the ones who provided the food and oversaw the people who cleaned our rooms and things like that.

Q: *And Brown and Root is a company?*

BOGOSIAN: Brown and Root is a Texas-based construction company, did lot of oil field work, and you had those kind of people around. Again it was just this surreal environment we were in. Obviously, you'd have no families there. We were on the American embassy compound, which is to say on a beach, surrounded by walls. But as I said, I had 40 combat Marines under my control. When I got there, at the beginning, this was the largest military operation in the world. It was the largest UN program in the world. We were continuing a major relief program. That still was going on. At the time, we had the only U.S. police assistance program, outside of Latin America. Mind you, we were beginning to try to facilitate national reconciliation. I'll talk a little bit more about that later. But almost from the day I got there, we were also withdrawing U.S. troops, and the idea was not to have any accidents, any sniping, anything like that going on. And the hope was we could get a government reestablished. So part of it was just reacting to this radically new and different environment. Part of it was trying to understand our military's needs and to make sure that to the extent I could help, they could get out of there all right. And keep in mind that it was a multinational operation and there was a UN angle and there were Pakistani troops and Egyptian troops and so on and so forth. And very often I was involved with them in one way or

the other.

But the other thing that happened, which gave that initial period some of its character, was that for all the trouble with Aidid, the decision was made that we should sit down and talk to him. So within a week of my arrival, Oakley arrived and we had our first meetings with Aidid. Now any time you sit down with someone who's been demonized, you expect to meet a demon. And on the one hand, we had all these soldiers and marines and ships off the coast and everything else, and on the other hand, when we went to have our first meeting with Aidid, we drove... You know, when I traveled in Mogadishu, the whole time I was there, if I left the compound on land, as distinct from by helicopter, I had three armored personnel carriers protecting me.

Q: *Imagine.*

BOGOSIAN: And not to mention driving in an armored station wagon. So we would go with all these APCs to the Ethiopian embassy, where we'd leave them. And they had what they called "technicals," which were like Toyotas with guns on them, full of these wild tribesmen, who were there to protect us. Now these are the guys that killed our soldiers, and I will just tell you that that takes some internal organizing to deal with emotionally. The other thing that happened is we went all over this labyrinthine town and got a hold of Aidid. Mind you, in the car we had a global positioning satellite mechanism, and they knew where we were at every moment, and if need be, they were ready to move; but in fact, our meetings with Aidid were uniformly civil, and he had his list of what he wanted to talk about, and he made his points, and we made ours. The main thing we were saying is okay, let's talk. And so the whole time I was there, notwithstanding what happened before I got there, we met with Aidid and his people, frankly, routinely, after that meeting. But that first meeting was one of those electrically charged emotional moments of my career. The other thing about those initial meetings was that, Aidid being the mini-dictator that he was, whereas less than a month, less than two weeks before I got there his people were desecrating American soldiers, he had thousands of his people out there to cheer us as we drove through there.

Q: *Was Bob Oakley with you?*

BOGOSIAN: Yes.

Q: *How is Bob Oakley to work with?*

BOGOSIAN: Well, of course, he was our ambassador to Somalia when I was director of East African Affairs, and so he and I get along pretty well. He's one of our most distinguished and capable diplomats. He had, of course, headed the initial operation when it was very successful, and he had people like General Zinni, who's now the commander of the Central Command, among his people there, and at least on one of those occasions, General Zinni was with him. So he had some awfully good people working with him.

The main point of Oakley was to get this whole relationship with Aidid from being confrontational to being one where we could talk. Now that didn't mean that we supported

everything he did, and frankly, it was not easy. It took a long time to get him, for example, to be willing to work with the United Nations. That's what we were trying for the whole time, because he bitterly resented the United Nations. We had a meeting in Addis Ababa in December, and I think it was at that meeting where Aidid didn't want to go because he was frightened. And Oakley arranged for the U.S. military to drive him to the airport.

Q: *Which is safer than having technicals drive him to the airport, or what?*

BOGOSIAN: Yes. This caused an uproar in some quarters of the United States. But Oakley said if it was for the cause of peace it was worth it. In fact, they had called me before I left Mogadishu, but Oakley was the one in the end who decided. But again, that was the environment we were working with in those early days in Mogadishu.

Q: *Was Admiral Howe involved in any of this?*

BOGOSIAN: Yes and no. I mean, we consulted closely with Howe, and I know for a fact that the White House was in touch with him because one day I got a call from the White House, they said, "Oh, wrong number, we want Admiral Howe." I mean, he was in the next what they called "hooch" down the road. But Howe was not directly involved in our bilateral diplomacy, but Howe was obviously involved in the broad UN program. See, Howe had three broad responsibilities, other than just managing this huge UN operation. One was the military, although as a practical matter Montgomery was the key figure there. Now Montgomery, I suspect, consulted with Howe, but I was not necessarily involved in that. One was the humanitarian operation. Now there was a lot of criticism of the humanitarian operation - the feeling that too many of these guys spent too much time in Nairobi, but that's where a lot of the NGO's (non-governmental offices) and other donors were. Also, in fact, there are times it's easier to get from Nairobi to, say, Kismayu, than from Mogadishu to Kismayu, or things like that.

But the third thing was political. And what they were trying to do in their - I don't know what word to use - in their desire to do the right thing, was to break the back of these warlords by creating district councils that were democratically put together; and the problem was it wasn't working. And I think there was a certain level of either hypocrisy, where people said you've got to do it, and then when it didn't work they criticized him for trying to do it.

Q: *Yes.*

BOGOSIAN: And one of the dilemmas of Somalia is that the warlords can justifiably be criticized for making the mess, but their argument is you can't bring peace without us. And we've never really been able to work that out. You can't ignore them, but they'll undercut you every time. And so I was going to say that when I heard I was going to Somalia I was talking to some of my colleagues, and on the one hand a fellow like Joe O'Neill, who at the time was DCM in Asmara, he said, "Dick, Somalia is a poison chalice." On the other hand, you had Ted McNamara, who had been ambassador in Colombia. He said, "Dick, you're going to have a ball." And then you had people like Ed Djerejian, who was consoling me. He said, referring to our policy, he said, "Dick, it's a muddle." And to some extent that's true. We never were quite sure

what we wanted to do in Somalia. And part of that was we thought we knew, but after those soldiers were killed, that political support just wasn't there, and there was increasing antagonism towards Boutros Boutros Ghali, who was the Secretary General of the United Nations, and I guess the way to put it is we were "conflicted."

I was in Somalia really only for about seven months, maybe closer to eight months, from November to June. In fact, during that time I was able to get home to the United States twice, and we had to go to Nairobi often as well as to travel within the country. So in that sense, as I say, it wasn't a very long assignment, but it was very intense.

It had, sort of, four periods to it. There was the initial period from when I got there in November until January, when we really had, in a sense, all 20,000 or so of our troops. There was still, at least in the early days, serious thought given to what would have been serious military engagements, although in fact, as I pointed out earlier, we never really had any serious military activity after that. Also, in terms of sheer excitement, that was a particularly creative time. We engaged Aidid; we engaged some of the others. And we pretty much began to rev up the diplomatic track and start talking about winding down the military track.

Then from January to the end of March, the main thing happening was our troops were leaving, and that attracted a lot of media attention, the home town newspapers and so forth, and it was a big logistical exercise for the military. And in fact, it went off without a hitch. But it was a major thing that happened. Over a 20-week period, 20,000 troops left, and the whole atmosphere changed. The third period in the late winter and early spring was one where we worked awfully hard to see if we could help develop some kind of national reconciliation. It was at that time that we could meet with various groups, either in Nairobi or somewhere else, and one individual, John Howe's successor, who was a Guinean diplomat named Lansana Kouyate-

Q: *Could you just say that again, Dick: Lansana Kouyate?*

BOGOSIAN: Yes. Now Lansana Kouyate was, as I say, a Guinean diplomat. He had been their ambassador in Cairo. He spoke English, French, and Arabic, which made him particularly able to communicate. He simply is a superb diplomat. He was Muslim and, therefore, could relate to the Somalis, but he was from West Africa and so wasn't a threat. He is presently the Secretary General of ECOWAS, the Economic Commission of West African States, and for a while he was a senior political officer in New York with the UN. And he and I worked very closely with each other, and the whole notion was to try to fashion some sort of political reconciliation among the Somalis. It didn't happen, but that's what we were trying to do during that period. And then, by the late spring, it became increasingly clear that they weren't serious. Now as it happened, Washington had agreed to my leaving in June, and I just rounded out my assignment. My successor, Dan Simpson, concluded that it didn't make sense to stay there, and shortly after he got there, he recommended that our mission be closed, and that recommendation was accepted. There were a couple of things I wanted to mention. One was that in January of 1994 there was what was the most serious incident that took place while I was there, and a little while ago you raised this issue. This is something that didn't get as bad as it might have gotten, but it could have been very bad. And what was happening was the following. By the way, this happened

while I was on my way to Nairobi for one of these meetings with Somalis, and I left - I don't know - nine or ten in the morning, whatever it was, and I got to Nairobi probably about two hours later, and as I was checking into the hotel, they said, "Did you hear what happened in Mogadishu?" And so this happened while I was in transit. And what was happening was that as - what by then was essentially routine - two of my staff were going for a meeting with Aidid's people, and that meant that they had to go by a place called K-4, which was one of the most congested - well, it wasn't so much that it was congested but it was congested in the sense that many major roads came together at K-4 - and like me, if I was traveling, they had the three army personnel carriers manned by these combat Marines, the Fast Marines. As they were going by K-4, some food was being distributed, probably by a Saudi relief organization, and somebody shot at the Marines. And then what happened, apparently, was that the bullets started flying from every direction, and our Marines returned fire. Now they got out of there in minutes, and none of our men were injured - and in that sense it wasn't as bad as it might have been - but some people did get killed. First of all, this was the kind of news that was reported back home, but in Mogadishu itself they came to me, including Westerners, and said, "Why do you use such heavy equipment? That's excessive force." So, on the one hand, I had to admire the way our people got out of there with a minimum of damage. On the other hand, even that damage that occurred raised public perception problems. What bothered me more in the aftermath of that incident - because it occurred while I was away, so when I got back I was trying to find out, well, what is it that happened. And it turned out that the young man who was in charge of the Marines had never checked with what they called the JTF, the Joint Task Force, which was essentially our military unit, as far as I could tell, mainly out of disdain - he didn't think they were worth much - but as a result, he didn't know that this food delivery was going to occur at K-4. If he did, he never would have gone there, because it's understood that those are extremely tense times because the people still wanted the food, and if they thought someone was going to get in the way of it, everybody had a bodyguard, and everybody had guns.

Q: *Was it a spontaneous shooting which had nothing to do with other-*

BOGOSIAN: It was never clear whether they were aiming at the Marines or not.

Q: *Were the Marines seen as stopping access to food?*

BOGOSIAN: Well, I don't know. It could be either that it was premeditated or that, as you are suggesting, someone got frightened and misinterpreted what was going on. What it did show was how highly inflammable the situation was and that when things went wrong people died. And that is what gave Mogadishu it's character at the time. And indeed, we got danger pay and I think everybody in that mission got a reward for valor, because it was a highly dangerous situation. And this leads me to another thing I wanted to say. As I told you, the under secretary for political affairs, Peter Tarnoff, said he wanted me to go out there, and he explained why. The under secretary for management, Richard Moose, kept saying, "Why are you there?" He thought it was madness to have a diplomatic mission in Mogadishu. And I said to Tarnoff, "Well, what do I do?" And he said, "You pay attention to me." But it was one of the most difficult things I had to do out there, was to walk some kind of a line between two under secretaries who had radically opposing views of what we should be doing in Somalia.

Q: *And one of them had been assistant secretary for Africa in the Carter Administration.*

BOGOSIAN: Yes, Dick Moose.

Q: *Dick Moose.*

BOGOSIAN: The way this worked out, however, was as follows. Now one of the things you have to understand is that our diplomatic facilities in Mogadishu - that is to say the embassy before everything fell apart - was one of the most impregnable in the whole world. In the aftermath of earlier terrorist events, it had been one of those embassies that was brand new and had all the latest security devices, so the buildings were quite safe, or at least relatively safe, as were the walls and all the rest. What I found was that the great majority of Somalis who wanted to see me, and many did, would come to me, which meant they had to come inside the walls. And when I did travel, it was either by air to the airport on the sea or to one other part of town. I mean, I've had Nigerian troops protecting me, but I was always protected by some kind of military unit. So the other thing was I felt I could do my work. In other words, I wasn't just sitting in my office unable to communicate with anybody. And our people didn't leave the compound. It wasn't that kind of a thing. You were in the compound the whole time. So I said to Moose that I understood that it was unsafe, but I also felt, on the one hand, that I was protected and my staff was protected and, on the other hand, we could get our work done.

Now that was fine, but toward the end of my tour, the safety in Mogadishu generally was breaking down and there was less and less payoff. I thought that between Kouyate and me we were making progress. We thought they were going to have a national conference and so forth; it's just that it never happened.

Q: *The payoff was getting less in the American presence or the UN presence?*

BOGOSIAN: Well the American presence, in terms of military, after the end of March -

Q: - *was fading out.*

BOGOSIAN: It just ended.

Q: *It ended.*

BOGOSIAN: It was zero, not counting us in the compound. Now the payoff was some kind of national reconciliation that would have helped put the country back together again, and in effect, we thought that could happen throughout much of the spring of 1994. What we found by the late spring, and what my successor determined was, they're not serious; therefore, why risk being in this dangerous place if you can't accomplish anything? So while I was there -

Q: *They're not serious, meaning many warlords.*

BOGOSIAN: Meaning the warlords were not willing to do what they had to to bring peace to the country. And that remains the case today.

Q: *Let me ask, those two under secretaries who didn't agree with each other, I have two questions. One is did their bosses know that the two under secretaries didn't agree on this thing, and if so, what did they do about it? And secondly, which of them was right in hindsight?*

BOGOSIAN: Well, I'd have to assume that their bosses knew, but I don't think that's particularly relevant, because I don't think the bosses - well, I mean in one sense, that we stayed in Mogadishu meant that Tarnoff won the battle, at that point, and when I sent in a telegram to both of them saying I understand your concerns, but also we have a job to do here, and I think we can do our work and be safe, they accepted that as analytically the final word. And in that sense, at least in the beginning, Moose did not make an issue out of it. But whenever I was in Washington, he harped on this, and he sent out special envoys to look at the situation and so forth. He was never comfortable with it.

I don't think it was a case that one or the other was right. I think it was a case that by midsummer, by the time Dan Simpson was there, the cost-benefit ratio had shifted so that Moose was right, quote-unquote, whereas earlier Tarnoff was right. But it wasn't that one was right and one was wrong, it was that the relative costs and benefits shifted. And the way I put it was, if I remained in Mogadishu, I like to think that I would have reached the same conclusion Simpson did. Simpson was the one who reached that conclusion, but I think I was probably heading in that direction myself.

Q: *What conclusion did he reach, and what happened?*

BOGOSIAN: His conclusion was that it wasn't worth keeping a mission in Mogadishu any longer, that to the extent there was any diplomatic or humanitarian work to be done, you could use Nairobi as your base.

Q: *And fly in and fly out.*

BOGOSIAN: Whatever. And the answer was, yes, we agree.

Q: *How much time was that after you left, Dick?*

BOGOSIAN: Months. Keep in mind that when Tarnoff asked me to go out, he said we want you to stay into next summer. And I think what he meant was, we could get our troops out by then (and in fact, they were out by the end of March) and by then it wouldn't appear that the United States left Somalia with its tail between its legs because of the people who were killed. This gets back to the no more embarrassments. By the summer of 1994, the Clinton Administration could say honestly, we gave it our best shot, it's just not working. And we're not stopping humanitarian assistance, which was the real bottom line of what this was all about. I mean, the other thing to note: I have a meeting tomorrow to talk about Somalia. It isn't as though we've given upon on Somalia. Our ambassador in Addis Ababa has a meeting this week with his colleagues to talk

about Somalia. There are efforts underway. Let's just say there's a more realistic sense of how difficult it's going to be, whereas in the early months of 1994, I think between Kouyate and me we thought we were going to have some success. There were news reports that Ali Mahdi and Aidid shook hands, and we thought we had gotten over the hump. But it wasn't that simple, and one of the problems was that these folks had become beholden to their troops, to these guys that ran around in these technicals and shot at people. They needed to pay them, and the way they enriched themselves was by looting and by controlling things like the port and the airport.

The other thing was, of course, that although the troops there were under Chapter 7 authority, which means that they could engage in a military action, none of the troops were willing to fight, and my recollection was some Nepali troops were murdered in the spring, and one by one, one incident after another, the international community just was disenchanted. And then in the UN there were these various votes about how long to extend UNOSOM. And there was a point where the notion was why bother? Now keep in mind that by then the humanitarian crisis just wasn't a crisis any more. Right now today, there are people worried about malnutrition or what have you in Somalia, but by the middle of 1994, the kind of problems that existed a year and a half before, they weren't there any more. In fact, toward the end of my tour, I was going by helicopter from somewhere to somewhere else, and it was just lush, it was beautifully green across the whole country. So in a sense, the situation evolved to a point where the decision to pull out was not as traumatic as it would have been had it been done earlier.

So those were the main elements of Somalia.

Q: *The highlights of the Somalia experience. God, that was difficult. Okay, then, this was the Somalia experience.*

BOGOSIAN: Well, the thing that occurred to me after Somalia was that, having gone through those exciting days of December 1990 in Chad, it never dawned on me that there would be a second feature, and that's what happened essentially in December and November of 1993. That was the really exciting thing, the idea of that first meeting with Aidid, and all that went with it, simply is one of the most exciting moments of my career, and I emerged from it with no physical damage and with some very exciting times. Needless to say, I was quite ready to leave Somalia when the time came. I was very upset at the thought of the Somali people, in a sense, in a situation that did not promise to get any better soon because, typically, you begin to relate to the people you meet, and the ones who want peace and the ones who wish there was a way out from under their dilemma. I returned to the United States, and by the way, just to note, in the late spring of 1994, one of the members of my staff said, "Did you hear about the helicopter incident?" And I immediately thought one of our troops had been shot or something, but what he was referring to was that incident over northern Iraq where U.S. helicopters shot down another U.S. helicopter that had Barbara Schell among its passengers, and she had been my first deputy chief of mission. And as it happened, I was able to be home for her memorial service, but that was a very sad event for me.

Anyway, I left Mogadishu in mid-June and came back to the United States, and my new assignment was to be the dean of the senior seminar at the Foreign Service Institute. Prior to that

my wife and I took a little bit of a vacation where we went to places like Levels, West Virginia, and Pittsburgh, and also Toronto and Ottawa and Montreal and New England. So we saw a lot of old friends and some places we had never been, and it was the perfect way to ease back into the United States. The senior seminar, which for me turned out to be a one-year assignment, was simply wonderful.

JAMES DOBBINS
Somalia Coordinator
Washington, DC (1993-1994)

Ambassador James Dobbins was born in Brooklyn, NY and raised in New York, Philadelphia, Manila, Philippines and Washington, D.C. area. He attended Georgetown University and served in the US Navy before entering the Foreign Service in 1967. He served in France, German and England. Ambassador Dobbins was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2003

Q: That's not very ...

DOBBINS: And there really wasn't much on offer at that stage. European Bureau said that they were going to support time for ambassador to Turkey, but when I found out that Marc Grossman, who was the executive secretary of the department and quite close to Christopher was also interested in going to Turkey, I knew that that wasn't going to happen. I went to Rand. I was asked to go to the Defense Department as the deputy assistant secretary of defense, but then that place was such an administrative mess that it never came to fruition. I came to Rand, to the Washington office of Rand, where I, at the invitation of the president of Rand, became a senior fellow. I was seconded from the State Department, I hadn't left State, and I guess I spent like three or four months there in what I had anticipated what would be a year or two.

I got called on once to do a project for Christopher on the State budget and how to improve its presentation and the prospects of congressional support for increases, and I spent a couple of weeks doing that and made the presentation to Christopher, but that was a very brief project. Then, about two days after the Blackhawk down incident ...

Q: This is in Somalia ...

DOBBINS: Where the helicopter went down and 18 Rangers were killed and an American soldier's body was dragged through the streets, and the policy cratered and the administration decided it was going to withdraw our forces. I got a call from Peter Tarnoff, who was the undersecretary for political affairs, saying that they needed to put somebody in charge of Somalia policy in order to ensure that we made a graceful exit.

Q: Yes.

DOBBINS: The decision was we'd stay six more months and then leave, so they needed somebody to take over the oversight of the Somalia operation and try to extricate us with as much grace as possible, leaving behind a force without us that would cover our retreat and make it look less abject. So I went back to the department and became the special Somalia coordinator, which turned out to be the first of a succession of such jobs, and I did that for, I guess, six or eight months, essentially until we pulled out.

Q: Well, this would be in, what, '94 about?

DOBBINS: Ninety-three, I think. It would have been late '93 to early '94, probably.

Q: When you got there, sort of what was the word? This was not your field of expertise at all. What were you getting from Africa and also from the military about this?

DOBBINS: Well, the military was relieved to have someone in charge at State, so they were perfectly happy, and certainly the Pentagon felt that the main reason that the policy had cratered was that State hadn't held up its end of the policy, and in consequence the military had gotten overextended and asked to do too many things. The assistant secretary for African Affairs was perfectly happy to transfer this responsibility to someone else, because it wasn't something he felt comfortable doing, wasn't something he was temperamentally suited for, and he was a gentleman and a very pleasant person. So he was more than happy to have somebody else who would take this off of his shoulders.

I think the rest of the bureau resented it and felt, "Why is this guy coming in? He doesn't know anything about the region. Why is he suddenly being parachuted in, and where does he fit?" We more or less got over this, and there was sort of uncertainty about exactly who I worked for and what the arrangements were. But we worked our way through all that, and we were broadly successful in achieving what had been set out for us to do, which is get the troops out, create enough of a peace process among the various warlords so it looked like we were making some progress and recruit a coalition that was prepared to stay for a year or two after we left, and I basically did that.

Q: Well, did you get any feel toward the feeling toward Jonathan Howe?

DOBBINS: Sure. I had known Howe quite well. Howe came from the State Department, you'll recall, and he was director of political-military affairs for two years, before he became deputy national security adviser. Well, there were a lot of people who were inclined to blame the problem on Howe, and he certainly contributed to it, but the problem was mainly made in Washington. It was a series of decisions and non-decisions by the new Clinton team that wasn't paying attention that made decisions without adequate forethought. So I think that the blame, mostly in my judgment, was Christopher, Lake, Aspin, and the president as much as it was Jonathan Howe or Boutros Ghali.

The administration was happy to blame it on the United Nations and successfully passed off a lot of the blame on the United Nations, but the problems were really ones of our own making,

including a screwed-up command situation in Somalia itself, which was the responsibility of the Pentagon and the military, including, I would guess, Colin Powell, who left only a short time before the disaster, but who must have had some role in setting up what turned out to be a flawed command structure.

Q: How were your relations with the Department of Defense on this?

DOBBINS: Pretty good. As I said, the Department of Defense was delighted that there was somebody they could turn to on the State side, because previously the responsibility had been dispersed and so there was a single person to call.

Q: Well, did you feel you had been handed a poison apple in a way? I mean, "Here's a mess. Let's give it to Dobbins and see what he does with it," or something.

DOBBINS: Well, in a sense. One of the differences I learned from another colleague who left the government to go into industry, when you go into industry, you want soluble problems, because your pay and your bonuses and your recognition are going to depend on your having brought concrete results. In the government, it's insoluble problems you want, because the more important the problem is and the more difficult it is, the more amount of staff, money, time and access to senior officials you'll get. So one of the most senior positions in the administration the last 50 years has been whoever's in charge of the Middle East peace process, right? He's not going to solve it. It's never been solved. It's not going to be solved, but it's still a prestigious position.

Similarly, for my career, who was in charge of fighting the Cold War? The assistant secretary for European affairs, because it included Russia and NATO, was a key official, not because he was going to win the Cold War, but because he was in charge of managing an insoluble problem. So, in that sense, getting tapped to do things like Somalia or Haiti or Bosnia or Kosovo would have been a dead loser if you were in private industry where you had a bottom line to show at the end of the year, but in government service, it meant that you had access to the top, that you were running a major issue that people cared about. So it wasn't as unrewarding as it might have first appeared.

Q: How did you find the relationship between sort of the State people in Somalia and the Pentagon people? Who was our top diplomat at the time?

DOBBINS: Well, we fired the first one. Part of the change when I was brought in was to get rid of the ambassador; he was thought to have shared responsibility for the problem. Gosende, I think was his name. So he left and a guy named Dick Bogosian, who I had worked with in Paris on my first assignment, knew pretty well and liked, he was a wonderful person, and who had been an Africanist, was sent to be our ambassador there, which was a very difficult and dangerous job.

He and I cooperated very closely. We talked every day. He was my principal implementer on the ground, and his relations with the military were very good.

Q: Did we see any possibility at that time of getting anywhere with the Somalis, or were they so fragmented?

DOBBINS: We very significantly reinforced our military strength there in an effort to stabilize the situation, and there was a brief hope that we could use that enforced strength to expand our control over the situation, but when we tried to do that, the senior levels of the administration, including in particular Christopher, said, "Absolutely not. No risks. Just stay in the foxholes, don't get out. Six months, we're leaving." So despite the fact that we now had the firepower and the increased presence that would have allowed us to assert more control in Mogadishu and tamp down some of the worst chaos, we chose not to do it.

We did promote a fairly active negotiating effort among the warlords. We actually flew Aidid to one of the meetings, which created great controversy, just the fact that we facilitated his going somewhere on a U.S. military plane after what he had done was a source of some anxiety back here. And I went out there and met with all of the Somalis. I met with them in neighboring Kenya rather than Mogadishu itself. It was virtually impossible to see people in Mogadishu. We made a little bit of progress. We actually got them all together. There were some discussions, but in the end they didn't amount to anything. And once we were out, we pretty much lost interest.

Q: Somalia, pulling out, I recall somebody saying that when we were trying to put pressure on the Serbs later on, they kept throwing the figure 18 at us, saying, "You can't take losses and you're going to pull out, so we don't have to worry about you really committing yourselves."

DOBBINS: I think a lot of people probably thought that. I don't know that many of them talked to us about it to our face, but there was certainly a lot of uncertainty about that, and the administration did a lot to substantiate that, by putting so much emphasis on force protection and avoiding casualties. On the other hand, we also demonstrated that, properly applied, we could exercise a lot of leverage even without suffering any casualties. After all, we won the war in Kosovo and concluded the war in Bosnia without suffering any casualties in both cases.

Q: It must have been a rather nervous time for you and others when we were pulling our troops out. It's always hard to get out of a place under hostile fire, or did it go pretty well?

DOBBINS: There wasn't any physical risk or any substantial physical risk. The day before our troops left, Shalikashvili and I flew out to say goodbye to the assembled allies who were staying and holding the beach while we left, who were mostly Pakistanis and Indians and other third world countries, because none of our European allies would stay. But, Somalis weren't about to do anything that might reverse our decision to leave, and so there was no active effort to hinder our departure.

Q: Well, we I guess were the main power there. How did we keep the Pakistanis and Indians and others to keep their troops there. Did we have deals or something?

DOBBINS: I was sent around on a presidential mission, given a delegation and an airplane, and went to Pakistan and India and Morocco and Italy and one or two other countries, in an effort to

persuade them to stay. They had their own reasons for staying. The Indians and the Pakistanis both liked to put their troops out on peacekeeping missions, because it was a good way of training them at somebody else's expense, so they had that incentive. The Egyptians, I went to Cairo. Other countries had national interests in Somalia that they felt worth pursuing. Others simply had felt stronger about the United Nations than we did and were inclined to support it, so for a variety of reasons, the countries were prepared to stay, and we gave them not firm commitments, but a general understanding that if things got bad, we would help extricate them, which we ultimately did. So, each country that stayed had reasons of its own to do it, and it was a fairly substantial force that stayed.

MARY A. WRIGHT
United Nations Operations
Somalia (1993-1994)

Ms. Wright was born in Durant, Oklahoma in 1946 and graduated from the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. She has served in numerous posts including Managua, St. George's, Tashkent, Bishkek, Freetown, Palikir, Kabul and Ulaanbaatar. She was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2003.

WRIGHT: So when I returned from Geneva, I went back to Marc [Grossman] and said, "I really want to work on the Somalia project." The Bureau of Political/Military Affairs had an International Security Operations office which was the part of the State Department that was focused o enlisting the aid of other countries to help out with Somalia. The ISO needed more people in the office and Marc kindly put me in that office. It was one of the best assignments I have ever had. Officers were pros at getting intra and inter agency decisions in a very short time. We did lots of liaison work within the Department and with other agencies, particularly Department of Defense.

As I went into that office the first troops were going into Somalia in late December of '92. They were finding that as they would move food through the country there would be Somalis that would say, "You've got to do more than just move food. You've got to help disarm the warlords." Our office was part of the State Department team that was working to get the United Nations to take on the Somali operation as a UN operation. I got to be a part of the U.S. delegation from Washington to go up to New York to talk to the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations. At the time there was a young Guinean diplomat Kofi Annan who was the deputy of peacekeeping operations. We got to know him very, very well.

My particular role on that team was to convince the UN they should continue the help the U.S. was giving to reconstitution of the former Somali police force. U.S. troops had already found a lot of Somali police coming back onto the streets in Mogadishu saying to the soldiers, "We will help on the streets to help direct traffic, to help keep Somali traffic out of your way; we'll help keep order in the neighborhoods. If you'll just keep the warlords off our backs then we'll help with just ordinary law and order." That was exactly where our troops needed some help. So our

U.S. military had sent back word that they needed funding to buy some uniforms for these police guys, to pay them somehow – to either give them food for work or come up with some sort of little stipend for them – which we were able to do. But when we wanted to turn the program over to the UN, we wanted to make sure the UN would continue this critical program. I went to the UN with the statistics on how many people we needed and what we were "paying" at the time. I got to go to Somalia to look at the police program and took with me members of the FBI's International Criminal Investigative and Training Assistance (ICITAP) program to evaluate what else the U.S. should be doing with the police. Before I left for Somalia, U.S. Navy Admiral Jonathan Howe, the former deputy national security council director under the Bush administration, a four-star admiral who had just retired from military service, had been arm-twisted into being the U.S. nominee as the first representative of the secretary general for the United Nations operation in Somalia (UNOSOM). The French had nominated a person for the job. But the United States wanted to have a U.S. civilian chief of UNOSOM since we were going to have many U.S. soldiers in Somalia. After some bickering within the Security Council, Admiral Howe was selected as the chief of the UN's Somalia operation.

Admiral Howe came out to Somalia while I was there to take a look at the operations before he arrived officially. While in Somalia I briefed him on the police program and he asked if I would be a part of UNOSOM and continue to work the police program. The police program turned into the justice program and entailed rebuilding not only the Somali police but the judicial and prison systems as well. I, along with several other Americans, was put onto Admiral Howe's staff to provide a core American presence to be working with the professional United Nations staff. That was one of the things that Admiral Howe demanded *[laughs]*: that the U.S. would push hard on the UN so that he could get some American Foreign Service and U.S. military officers directly on his staff. Good from his point of view, but the United Nations was a little bit bent out of shape that an American who was recently a U.S. military officer would be heading the civilian part of the operation, and then demanding that U.S. Foreign Service officers and military officers take key positions on his staff instead of professional UN staff. But that's what happened.

Q: When you went out there permanently, when was this?

WRIGHT: I was seconded to UNOSOM in February of '93.

Q: When you'd been up in the UN did they want to get into this thing or were we dragging them kicking and screaming?

WRIGHT: The UN professional staff was very wary of the U.S. dragging the UN into Somalia. The U.S. dragged the UN into Somalia with the UN kicking and screaming. I guess that was the first time we dragged them in and I predict we continue to drag them kicking and screaming in Iraq.

In the beginning, the UN staff said it was the U.S. unilateral decision to go in and help on the humanitarian side and that the U.S. constructed a coalition of fifteen countries to do this operation and you got yourself into all of this and you should continue it – and not the United Nations. Then the U.S. pushed hard and ultimately the Security Council authorized that the

United Nations would go ahead and take over the operation. But it was a very difficult one for the UN to take over because at that point the Department of Peacekeeping Operations was truly peacekeeping; it was not peacemaking. This was the first Article 7, or peacemaking operation, that had been authorized by the Security Council. The forces that went in under UN auspices would go in with the authorization to use force to maintain control. They wouldn't be peace observers and just be able to shoot if shot upon, but they could go out and disarm people.

At that point the Department of Peacekeeping Operations was very, very small. In fact they had no operations center; they had no military staff, they had a very, very tiny, little office in New York. After the Somalia experience, the UN created a true 24 hour operations center. Our U.S. military went up to New York, along with military representatives from other countries, to help them set up a twenty-four hour operations center. At the time the UN had no ability to go out and search for countries to fill such a huge role. The U.S. and its coalition members had over 30,000 military that went into Somalia. The UN had never mounted any military operation with any number close to that before. So we, the U.S. (particularly the Office of International Security Operations), asked many countries to contribute troops to this coalition, a process that has been used endless times in the last ten years. ISO was the key office in the Department that wrote and got cleared from other State Department offices and endless DOD offices the cables that went out of the Department asking our embassies to go to the governments and request that they join the UN's coalition of military forces in Somalia.

Q: When you went out to Somalia what was the situation like on the ground when you first got there?

WRIGHT: When I first got there the security environment was pretty good. The warlords had accepted the fact that there was a huge U.S. and coalition presence. They were not challenging in any way the U.S. military. They were allowing the military to escort the food convoys that were going out all over the country to feed the starving. We from the Bureau of Political/Military Affairs were urging the Department of Defense to e disarm the warlords right then. We figured that was the time to disarm the bad guys when we had so many U.S. military in Somalia and the warlords had backed off. But the decision was made by our government that that U.S. forces would not disarm the warlords. We would leave it to the UN to later disarm them.

As we found out, leaving disarming the warlords to the poorly equipped UN forces didn't work at all. The moral of that lesson, to me, is that if you're going to go into situations with warlords, you need to be ready to go ahead and immediately disarm the warlords who are causing the conflict. You can not dilly-dally around because it won't get done if it's not done in the very early days when you have the warlords stunned by your overwhelming presence.

Q: What was the spirit when you got out there on the police front? Did you feel that this was going to work?

WRIGHT: Yes. The Somali police were working in the areas in which we needed help. We needed them for the traffic control and for assistance in domestic criminal cases. If there were problems in neighborhoods, we let them solve the situations and keep us informed. That was

working. We were getting police coming out from the rubble and volunteering to help us in every town that we went into. The police had had excellent training before, they were professional. Now they had very little equipment, but they still remembered their basic policing skills.

Q: As I recall, the police were probably the most professional, they were sort of a major power in the area.

WRIGHT: That's right. The Somali police had received a lot of international training from the British, French and Italians. Each of those nations had "colonized" a part of greater Somalia, or Somaliland, in some time of its history.

Q: Italian, French and British.

WRIGHT: Each of those countries had done a very good job in training police. We had a core group of police in every region that volunteered to help first the U.S. forces and then the UN. At one stage we had over 10,000 police assisting UNOSOM.

Q: At a certain point this became one of those lessons of what not to do, and that was known as Mission Creep where we went from assuring lines of supplies and all to the starving people and all, to starting to call it nation building and all. Were you there when that began?

WRIGHT: Yes, the police program was the first element of that creep and it crept on us because we needed it. We needed Somali police to relieve our own military of some of the duties that they felt were not theirs, like normal traffic policing. As that program started then the idea of if you've got police on the streets and they're picking up people and could be charged with crimes of burglary or murder or whatever – not the warlords' murder, but the average citizens murder – then you've got to have a court system to try them. Then if you've got the court system that tried them, you've got to reestablish prisons to put the convicted in. All of a sudden we moved very quickly into reestablishing many types of civil administration institutions. At the same time you had Somalis that were saying, "We haven't been able to have our schools in operation for a while. We need to get our schools going again," and "We've got health clinics that should be patched up so we can use them. Help us, please, with these." As you would start trying to help these sectors then essentially what you've done is created the need for the international community to help monitor or coordinate or organize these systems with the local Somalis. It goes very quickly from just securing lines of supply to assisting in lots of other areas that have to really be helped. It seems to me that there will never be a military operation that will be neat and clean and without the need for some element of civil reconstruction, unless it's a strike operation on a nuclear plant and you do it by air. Once you put military troops on the ground, you have created a situation that you're going to have to do some level of nation rebuilding.

Q: Did you see the turn towards getting rid of the warlords? In the first place, the arrival of a lot of UN troops, particularly Pakistanis and others, were these a plus or a minus, in a way?

WRIGHT: The arrival of the Pakistanis as a major element of the UN military forces was a plus because without them there would not have been a UN presence. The U.S. was fully intent on

moving out the vast majority of its troops by late March, early April of '93. The U.S. was moving its troops faster than UN troops were coming into Somalia. The U.S. was orchestrating who was volunteering to be a part of that UN force. The U.S. told the Pakistanis that we would fly their troops and equipment into Somalia. We were telling the Nigerians: "We will give you anything you want. Do you need weapons? Do you need uniforms? What do you need?" because we wanted to pull our troops out of Somalia and we needed replacement units.

The U.S. pulled back faster than we supplied the other nations with transportation to get into Somalia. I remember vividly in Mogadishu sitting at one of the UNOSOM senior staff meetings with Admiral Howe and being briefed by the very small UN military contingent. The UN military commander said, "Admiral, you may not realize it but right now the U.S. only has 10,000 troops left in Somalia and we only have 5,000 UN troops here. So there are only 15,000 troops on the ground. Before there were 30,000 troops. 5,000 of the Americans are going to be leaving next week, which means we will only have 10,000 military on the ground and we have no more UN troops on the horizon to come to Somalia. The next UN units will arrive in a month or two later. We are in serious trouble. We don't have enough military here for the security we need."

It wasn't just the UN that was realizing there were too few military to keep adequate security. The warlords had their people at the seaport and airport. They were watching and counting who was coming and going and they saw, particularly General Aided, very quickly that the numbers of U.S. troops on the ground were fewer and fewer while there were only a small number of UN replacements coming in. That gave Aidid confidence that he could attack the UN forces. He picked the Pakistanis to ambush because they had been ordered to seize a radio station that Aided had been using to put out all sorts of nasty little propaganda against U.S. and UN forces. The Pakistanis were instructed to go in and take over the radio station so it wouldn't be broadcasting anymore – not to destroy it, but just to stop Aidid's guys from using it. The Pakistanis took control over the station and then started moving the majority of their troops back down through central Mogadishu back to the stadium where they were living. Aidid militia attacked them and killed forty-seven of them. Killed and mutilated – I mean really did despicable things to that group of Pakistanis. With that attack it was war between the UN and General Aidid. At the instigation of the U.S., the UN allowed a $25,000 reward to be put out for Aidid "dead or alive," a program that made the UN troops on the ground feel better, but ended up causing ever increasing bitterness in the Somali community. Neither UN nor unilateral U.S. missions to kill or capture Aidid were successful. By the middle of 1994, eighteen months after the U.S. intervention, the Aidid had beaten back the U.S. unilateral Delta Force and Ranger operation chronicled in the "Black Hawk Down" movie and had beaten back the commitment of the international community.

Q: How long were you there?

WRIGHT: I stayed from February until August.

Q: So what was the situation in August when you left? Had the warlords started their attacks by this time?

WRIGHT: Yes. The Pakistanis were killed in June and from June on it was very, very difficult to move around Mogadishu. It was difficult to drive overland anywhere, especially in central and southern Somalia. In the northwest, the old former British Somaliland, General Egal had declared independence from the rest of Somalia and set up his own administration. He was trying desperately trying to get the international community to recognize his government. He was running a very good operation; things were happening up there. Commerce was starting up again with minimal human rights violations. To a lesser degree, in the Bossaso area in the northeast was also beginning to thrive. But central and southern Somalia was definitely in the grips of bad warlords.

Q: Did you sense within your group a growing frustration? You know, we've got to lash out; we've got to do something.

WRIGHT: Yes. It started right after the Pakistanis were killed. Of course, that incident stunned everyone. It was incredible that General Aided would have the nerve to mount an attack against the United Nations forces and so quickly after its arrival. Very quickly, with U.S. pressure, there was a specific program where wanted posters saying "$25,000 for General Aidid " were quickly printed up by psychological operations teams that the U.S. still had there. Those posters incited a lot of violence in Mogadishu. There was a lot of support for General Aidid and General Atta in Mogadishu because the warlords were feeding a great number of people there. The posters that said whoever gives us information that will help us capture Aidid caused great problems. Four Somalis who were distributing the UN newspaper that contained the posters were murdered as they went out into neighborhoods to distribute the newspapers that had some of these requests for information.

The United Nations military forces asked the U.S. to use its helicopters in Mogadishu to attack certain compounds where we thought Aided might be. These attacks were very problematic in terms of international law. The UN forces would cordon off a section of Mogadishu and then the helicopters would fire into the building where they believed Aidid was regardless of the number of "civilians" in the building. As the head of the UN's Justice division, I felt it was my obligation to highlight to the head of the UN operations that in my legal judgment those operations were in violation of the law of land warfare. I am a lawyer and I have international law and the law of land warfare experience in the U.S. military. I taught international law at Fort Bragg to the officers that spearhead U.S. military operations. I believed the way the UN military forces were mounting its operations was in violation of international law because it was not giving notice to civilians of direct attacks that were going to occur on specific buildings, and were in fact cordoning off the area so the civilians couldn't escape. I put my two cents worth into a memo to Admiral Howe. This memo was very quickly leaked to the international press by members of the UN civilian staff who were very displeased with the way UN military operations were being conducted as they jeopardized critical humanitarian operations. My memo caused got quite a bit of notoriety about the dissension within UNOSOM. However, my memo didn't stop the way the UN military was conducting operations. Later on in September, "93, the U.S. started its own unilateral operations in Somalia to keep going after Aidid.

Q: This was after you left.

WRIGHT: Yes, about three weeks after I left, the U.S. brought in special teams Delta Forces and Rangers and formed a military command outside the United Nations. The deputy UN military commander was a two-star U.S. Army general and the head of all the UN military was a three-star Turkish general. The U.S. wanted to have the number two position because we wanted a U.S. general in the change of command for U.S. logistics and communication unit that were assigned to the UN operation. We wanted to have our general so we could maintain to that U.S. troops were always under U.S. command, an important fig leaf. The U.S. two-star deputy UN military commander was not informed by the U.S. military that they were going to be bringing in special operations troops, Delta troops and Rangers, to mount unilateral U.S. operations against Aided. In September, the U.S. unilateral mission resulted in two helicopters getting got shot down and pilots killed and dragged through the streets and another taken hostage. The force that went in to rescue the downed helicopter pilots then came under fire with seventeen Rangers killed in the rescue mission.

Q: But hundreds of Somalis.

WRIGHT: No one knows the numbers of Somalis killed. By that time I had left Somalia and had come back to Washington to start Russian language training for my onward assignment to Kyrgyzstan. For my one Washington assignment I escaped with serving only two months in Washington by volunteering to go to Somalia. I had enjoyed being in Central Asia and bid on our embassy in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. I came back to start Russian language training. In September, I was sitting in language class when the head of the Russian language training came into our small classroom and said, "Which one of you all is Ann Wright?" and I thought, Uh, oh. This is not really a question that I want to answer. But I said "I am." And the chief said, "Have you been watching the news?" I said, "No." He said, "Well, there are big problems in Somalia and we've just gotten a phone call from Dick Clarke over at the National Security Council. He wants you to come over there right now." And I thought, Oh, god. Here we go. It turned out to be the downing of two U.S. helicopters in Mogadishu - the Blackhawk Down incident.

When I had come back from Somalia I had gone by the National Security Council to talk to Dick Clarke and a junior staff member at the time, a woman by the name of Susan Rice who several years later became the assistant secretary of state for African Affairs. Dick Clarke had been heading the Somali operations for the NSC. When we would have big inter-agency meetings or video conferencing Dick would usually chair them. From the beginning of the U.S. operation in Somalia and subsequently in the UN operation, the police program was an integral part of our operations. I had had a lot of face time with Dick, talking to him either in person or over the video conferencing about the program. When I came back from Somalia I went by the NSC to remind him that the U.S. had not kicked in its contribution to the police program. United Nations was doing what we wanted to be done with the police, judicial and prison programs. But the monies that the U.S. promised to the UN for these programs had not shown up. The programs were suffering because the UN didn't have the contributions from donor nations like the UN. So upon my return from Somalia, I dutifully went back to the NSC to tell Dick and Susan that I felt the U.S. had let the UN down on these critical programs. At the time I said, "These are going to be key programs that will ensure the stability, to the extent anything can ensure it, for Somalia

and we've got to really help the UN do this." I laid it on thick.

So, after the Blackhawk Down incident, the NSC wanted to talk about the U.S. exit strategy from Somalia. Clarke said the White House had decided that fully funding the police and judicial programs would be a key part of the U.S. exit strategy. The U.S. would fund these programs, get our troops out of Somalia, and turn the whole damn thing over to the UN because we had lost troops. We would wash our hands of Somalia. Blackhawk Down was a military and political embarrassment to the United States. Two helicopters shot down by Aidid's militia. The warlords were beating our most experienced and talented special operations troops. So the U.S. would back out of this mess and the way we would get out would be to very publicly say that the U.S. is proud to really start pushing the police program as the key to the success of Somalia. So Clarke said, "I want you to go back to Somalia very, very quickly and get a good police program moving," and I said, "Well, I need money to move it." He said, "Twelve million dollars. You got it right now. Go find people to help you."

I had worked with the FBI's (Federal Bureau of Investigation) international criminal assistance training program (ICITAP) earlier in the year. We had brought out some of the ICITAP people to do an early assessment of what things needed to be done with the police. We created budgets for the items the program would need and submitted the budgets through the UN back to the U.S. But the U.S. had never provided funds. So Dick said, "Twelve million, ICITAP, I don't care - whoever you can talk into helping. Let's just get moving with this." So I made a quick trip over to ICITAP headquarters to let them know of our opportunity. Within about a week we had a ten person group that went back into Somalia and started working with the UN to get the police program moving – and we did move fast. We created a police training academy, we had a judicial program, and cleaned up the prisons a little bit. All of this was in place by March of the next year. I only stayed in Somalia from October until December. By that time we had enough expertise in the country that I could turn my role over to others. Unfortunately trouble continued between the warlords and UN forces. In April the international community through the Security Council decided to end its involvement in Somalia. So just as we were getting all those programs going, the international door slammed shut on Somalia.

Q: It turned into real chaos. Apparently it's beginning to get a little better now. I think they've gotten exhausted or something like that.

WRIGHT: *[laughs]* That's probably the only way it's better.

STEVENSON MCILVAINE
Deputy Chief of Mission
Mogadishu (1993-1994)

Born in Pennsylvania of Foreign Service Parents, Mr. McIlvaine was raised in Washington D.C. and abroad. He graduated from Harvard University and served in the US Army before joining the Foreign Service in 1967. His assignments

abroad took him to a number of posts in Africa, including Kinshasa, Bissau, Dar es Salaam, and Lusaka, where he served as Chargé d'Affaires. At the State Department in Washington, Mr. McIlvaine dealt primarily with African issues. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2003.

Q: Let's talk about Somalia. Give some background of how you got into it.

MCILVAINE: I'm in the Regional Affairs Office. That's always the office the Africa Bureau front offices uses for things that don't neatly fit into one of the regions. The Africa Bureau is divided into 4 regional offices: South, East, West, and Central, and an Economic Office and an Administrative Office and a Regional Affairs Office. The Regional Affairs Office is for everything that doesn't fit into one of the others. It does all the UN work, which is continent-wide. It does the theme works like democracy, whatever the theme of the moment is that we're pushing. And the staffers there are the pool that the assistant secretary and the deputy assistant secretaries draw on when they need to take something that isn't country specific or even region specific, like democracy. And when it came to Somalia, there was no Somalia desk because there was no government in Somalia. There had been no government for 2 years. Said Barre had been thrown out, and a civil war followed between the factions that threw him out. That civil war and a drought led to a massive famine in the Horn. It was an early example of what became known as the "CNN syndrome" where a humanitarian crisis is put on television so constantly that it builds up a constituency for doing something about it. That constituency developed inside the government as well as outside - the NGOs and political activists and others. Assistant Secretary Cohen was definitely interested in seeing if there was some way the U.S. government could usefully help solve this, particularly the famine. So we started working - this was '92 - first through AID - some emergency relief efforts, just getting food to starving Somalis.

Meeting after meeting was held in Washington. I was Cohen's note taker and report drafter for much of it. The logistics were daunting. This was a country in civil war. You couldn't find any airport. We managed to get some food in, but the frustrations built because the food kept being stolen by gunmen of various militia factions and you couldn't keep anybody on the ground safe without some sort of security. There was no security. You couldn't make sure the food got to where it was supposed to get to. That frustration built. Working with the Pentagon, we organized a humanitarian relief effort, flying out of Mombasa, Kenya, C130s onto Somali airstrips to unload food. But here, too, as soon as the food was unloaded, the gunmen rode in in their technicals, which are jeeps with machineguns mounted in the back, and stole the food.

Pictures continued to show the famine building. Film crews were able to get in and out. It was a national issue, a national debate going on, by mid to late 1992. That was also the election year. George Bush was defeated by Clinton in November. As a final shot, as he's going out the door, Bush decided that he would intervene to stop the famine and send in U.S. military to provide the security.

That was the key element. We had been debating and going through these policy meetings over and over again. How do we do this without sending in the U.S. military? Nobody wanted to send them in. The answer was, we can't. So then the question became, do we send them in? That was

debated round and round within the bureaucracy, particularly the State Department and the Pentagon. Finally, then President Bush decided that he was going to send them in to stop the famine.

I was deputy coordinator of the task force in the Operations Center a December night as we watched on TV as the first Marines started coming ashore to be met by the TV crews on the beaches of Mogadishu. It went very well the first few months. The troops came ashore. All the bad guys put down their weapons or hid them and behaved for a while in awe of American military power. A large military force secured Mogadishu and enough of Somalia to begin the food distribution. By April of '93, we had sent out a little mission. We had a big UN headquarters set up. The force had become largely UN. We began withdrawing the American troops and turning it over to the UN as a famine relief operation, but the building issue was, what do we leave behind? Do we just say, okay, we've stopped the famine and turn around and leave and the gunmen pick up where they left off? Or do we try to somehow settle the political problems? What became something of a dirty word, "nation building," do we get into nation building?

At about that time, the warlords had all been behaving, but Aidid, this one particular warlord who was powerful in south Mogadishu, which was where the UN and U.S. headquarters were, he had been running a radio station that was very important to him. He was probably the only warlord who had a radio station. It was Soviet-style propaganda and it had become increasingly harshly critical of the UN and the famine relief, imputing all sorts of evil designs to this effort, on Somali politics when in fact this effort had no particular designs on Somali politics other than to find something to leave behind that would be responsible. So, the UN started rumbling - and when I say the UN, it was really the U.S. because the UN senior special representative of the Secretary General was Admiral Howe, an American who had been on the Security Council staff, and the deputy commander of the UN forces was an American general and much of the muscle of the UN force was still American - the UN started considering and talking about doing something about this radio station.

Aidid saw that as a threat and in June his militiamen attacked a feeding station that was guarded by Pakistani UN troops. 24 Pakistanis were killed. Then their bodies were mutilated and eviscerated by Aidid's militiamen as a political statement that "We will not countenance this interference. If there is going to be feeding in my territory, I'll do it. You're not going to mess with my radio station." Aidid was beginning to see this mission as a threat to his chances of taking over Somalia.

The U.S. and the UN had to respond to that. The question was, how do we respond? The decision was that we could not countenance this. We had to respond forcibly. We would go after Aidid. This is June 1993. That's where the so-called "famine relief effort" stopped and the so-called "nation building" that was later considered a mistake began. From that came the decision, just as I was arriving in July, to try to forcibly hunt Aidid down, as he obviously wasn't going to surrender, and remove him from the scene as a clear enemy to any sort of stability and any sort of new form of government. From that came the decision to bring in a U.S. Ranger force to do this nasty job. They arrived in July.

I was the deputy in our little imitation American embassy. It wasn't a real embassy because we didn't have a government, so it was called the "United States Liaison Office." Bob Gosende was the ambassador. I was the DCM. We had a couple of political officers and an AID officer and a few others. Our job was twofold. One was to be liaison with the UN mission and report back to Washington on what they were doing, what they needed, how that was going, and two, to see what we could do to establish some sort of Somali body politic that could carry on and provide a measure of stability and security, nation building.

What we were not consulted on was this Ranger force, where they should go, what they should do. They came in, set themselves up at the airport, attached a liaison officer to work with us, but made it clear that their security was so important and so based on intelligence that they would only tell us about missions after they happened. That was the case. In retrospect - and this is all the background to "Blackhawk Down," to the movie and to the events on October 3 when this force went in and tried to capture senior leadership of Aidid's faction, They got into an all-night firefight, 18 Americans were killed and the whole U.S. attitude towards humanitarian intervention changed. Our Somali policy changed dramatically and we began backing away from all this. "Nation building" became a dirty word.

Q: When you arrived, we had a policy which was... You came at a time when nation building was in the air.

MCILVAINE: I think the original thought of the Bush administration had been that this would be humanitarian relief, we'd bring in the food, and then we'd leave. But anybody who thought hard about it, including the Africa Bureau, who had to work out the parameters of this, you had to leave something behind or the same problem was going to come back within days of your leaving. You were going to have the same anarchy and the same gunmen running around stealing food.

Q: When you arrived, how did you find... We had forces on the ground and we had the State Department running a mini-embassy. How did you find relations between the military part of our presence in Somalia and the political side, which was our side?

MCILVAINE: There were some interesting differences. Working there on the ground was not a problem. We were all living in this fortified military camp with frequent firefights at night and mortars and tracer rounds and stuff like that - usually, Somali on Somali, and sometimes Somalis just making sure we knew they were around and didn't like us. So, it was a pretty terrible place in this city that had been absolutely ruined and gutted by more than 2 years of civil war, anarchy, and looting. On the ground we got along fine. I had been in the military and had worked with the military, I understood that world and was not uncomfortable working with military officers.

CENTCOM command in Tampa was responsible for the mission -- remember Schwarzkopf had been the hero of CENTCOM just a year earlier when he led the first Iraq war effort... He had retired and been replaced by General Hoar, who viewed this whole Somalia thing with great disdain. He basically didn't want his soldiers in this messy, non-war footing, getting into things

that were not combat. So he had very tight strings on the 2 star General Montgomery, the deputy commander of the UN force and the commander of the U.S. forces - he was the man on the ground - which violated the Powell Doctrine and Powell had just stepped down as Chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Powell Doctrine said you give the man on the ground everything he needs and then you let him do it. Hoar was doing the opposite. He was giving the man on the ground the bare minimum, nipping at every bit of it, and placing strings on it. There weren't any heavy armor or any forces really able to go in and get those guys out of downtown Mogadishu when the Black Hawk went down because Hoar had not allowed them to have any. He also was calling 2 or 3 times a day, keeping all sorts of strings on his general. "If you want to do anything, you have to get it approved by me." He just didn't like this whole mission. He wanted to get out of it. He wanted to get out of it without any of his soldiers getting hurt. And he wanted it over with. He viewed our embassy with considerable distrust as part of the civilian crowd that had gotten us into this mess in the first place. So, there was a line of friction there.

In Mogadishu, in this walled compound that had been the old embassy compound where we were all camped out, I think relations were good. We were all in the same mess. We all understood each other. There was a very high level of professionalism. Everybody there had come there because they wanted to get this done. They were all volunteers. They all were away from wives and families and the normal comforts of civilian life or even garrison life. It was an impressive group.

Q: What about the NGOs? They were doing the feeding, weren't they?

MCILVAINE: There it was very interesting. Some of the NGOs, particularly some like Save the Children, had been operating before this intervention by making - and they had to - tacit alliances with warlords. So, they sometimes tended to take on the coloring of the warlords' attitude. In south Mogadishu, that meant Aidid. So some of them viewed us with distrust, which turned out to be from their point of view justified when indeed we went after Aidid. So there was some friction there. But they needed us. They needed our protection. They needed the food supplies if they were distributing food. In some ways, that relationship was difficult.

Q: How was Jonathan Howe perceived?

MCILVAINE: The thing I remember most about him was that for someone who had been an admiral in the Navy and commanded ships and even fleets, you expected a persona, a forceful, decisive, commanding presence, and he wasn't like that at all. Maybe he had been like that. But in his UN hat and civilian role, he was almost indecisive. He had trouble making decisions. Of course, he was in a difficult position. The Americans wanted to do this. The UN bureaucracy wanted to do that. He had a number of competing clients, as you inevitably do in that situation. They don't all say quite the same thing. But he was not a forceful, dynamic leader.

Q: You were there at a time when you might say the communication revolution was really beginning to make itself felt as far as being able to... Communications from Washington, how did you find dealing with this, or was this much of a problem?

MCILVAINE: That was a big problem later after October 3rd. Everything changed with October 3rd.

Q: October 3rd being when 18 people were killed.

MCILVAINE: Yes. To get back to the narrative, it had become increasingly clear to us -- us being me, Ambassador Gosende, and a few others -- that this was not working, this effort to get Aidid, that they were getting bad intelligence. The vivid example I remember is, they decided they'd spotted a tall, bald, black man in a part of Mogadishu where they could get to him and they went in and took him down thinking they had Aidid, whereas if they had talked to us or anybody who knew anything about Mogadishu, they could have told him that where this man was Aidid couldn't live for 2 seconds. It was on the wrong side of town in Ali Mahdi territory, and obviously it wasn't Aidid. In fact, it was Said Barre's chief intelligence officer and chief torturer from the previous regime, who was then working with the warlord who opposed Aidid, Ali Mahdi. No tears shed that they took him down, trussed him up like a chicken, and hustled him off to be interrogated only to find they had entirely the wrong guy.

They also jumped into an NGO house and scared the hell out of the usual international staff of several people who hunkered down in a little house in Mogadishu and all these guys come in with helicopters in the middle of the night blowing doors down. They had great machinery, extremely well trained, the best trained soldiers you've ever seen, great technology, and poor intelligence. The intelligence never got good enough.

We, Gosende and I, by mid-September were talking amongst ourselves and saying, "This is just not working." Then the second week in September, I drafted and Gosende worked on it and we sent in a cable to the Department saying, "We need to look at this. We need to change it. We need to try a different approach. Maybe we have to talk to Aidid. Maybe we have to start negotiating with him. This approach isn't going to work. We're not going to get him. We're just making more enemies than we are friends. We're wasting resources. Killing a few Somalis who get in the way is not going to work." Near as we can tell, that cable made no impact. Washington was diverted by other things. I don't know. We never got any comment. Nothing happened. And then October 3rd, 2-3 weeks later.

Q: Prior to October 3, were you able to function like an embassy, go out and talk to people?

MCILVAINE: No. By July, when the war against Aidid had started, his people started ambushing convoys and we could not go out without armed escorts. We had a company of FAST Marines. We would go out in an armored car with a HUM-V on either end with a grenade launcher or a heavy machinegun mounted on the HUM-V and a bunch of very heavily armed Marines as escorts. We would drive over to north Mogadishu to talk to Ali Mahdi or wherever to talk to various political figures and warlords. But it was a big production to go out. We had to basically intimidate. We had to make sure we were so fierce that no gunmen would take a try at us. You couldn't walk the streets. You couldn't go out...

Q: Could you negotiate with these people?

MCILVAINE: All with the exception of Aidid, as we later finally concluded, yes. But the exception was Aidid. He really believed that he had overthrown Siad Barre and therefore had a God-given right to rule Somalia. All his allies in the fight against Siad Barre disagreed with him on that. They were scared of him. He was the first amongst equals. He was the stronger but never - and that was the Somali conundrum - they had gone through 2 years of this; they went on through another... They're still at it. He was not strong enough to dominate everybody else, but he wasn't weak enough for anybody to overthrow him. So, you had a stalemate.

Q: What was happening out in the countryside by this time?

MCILVAINE: It was reverting quickly to medieval Europe where the regional dukes or warlords would control as far as they could control, as far as they had tribal allies from their clan and militiamen and money to keep the militiamen happy and armed and fed. Then there would be the next local warlord. There would be these areas that were in-between the no man's land and the borders would shift as one got stronger and one got weaker.

Q: Were people getting fed?

MCILVAINE: People were getting fed after the spring of '92. There were NGOs that had been able to operate. And then we had UN forces that would provide a measure of security. We had the Indians in the south in Kismayu and places like that. We had the Italians in the west along the Ethiopian border. We had UN forces scattered through the country. We got up to 25,000 UN troops and that was able to keep a measure of order, allow the NGOs to operate, and people were getting fed. So we broke the famine and that remains the accomplishment of the mission. The famine was stopped. To this day, there hasn't been a famine like that.

Q: At that time, were we seeing a separatist movement? I'm of an age when I remember British Somaliland. Was that a different kettle of fish?

MCILVAINE: It was. That had already established itself as... It had fought Siad Barre, too, on its own terms. When the civil war broke out in the south, Hargeisa and what became Somaliland became its own little enclave. Instead of a warlord, they had a president and a nominal country, but it was basically another warlord. It was clan based. The Isa clan was one clan that dominated that whole area. And they had reasonable peace and stability there.

Q: Did you go up there?

MCILVAINE: Yes. The president wanted recognition and we didn't want to recognize him because it would mean recognizing that Somalia had fragmented into many different pieces. To this day, we have not recognized Somalia for that reason. But we did recognize that he had at least established some measure of stability and that was important, so we did visit. There were NGOs that operated there. There were also some traditional Somali problems. People were occasionally taken hostage for ransom. Shootups.

Q: You were not informed of this Special Operation Force that went in to get Aidid, which became known as Blackhawk Down?

MCILVAINE: Right. That was the name of the kind of helicopter... In the early going of this, the Rangers were intent on taking down a meeting in the Olympia Hotel in a part of central Mogadishu. The troop carrying helicopters were called Blackhawks, still are. In the early going, one and then a second were shot down. So that came the cryback over the radio, that something had gone wrong: "Blackhawk down." That was what the movie was named after.

Q: What happened?

MCILVAINE: That afternoon, the Navy commander who was our liaison and was normally a cheery, infallibly optimistic sort, came... I was chargé at this point. Gosende had gone back on leave. I was chargé and he came to me and said, "We're doing an operation in this part of Mogadishu. We think there's a meeting there and there's some important Aidid folks that we can get. But it looks like trouble. We're having trouble. We're getting into a fight." This was late afternoon. I had seen helicopters going over and so I guessed that something was going on. This was about 2 miles from us and you could hear it. Later that night, I got up on the roof of the embassy. We had taken over the old USIA building, which was very heavily fortified, built back in the mid-'80s. We had taken that over as our embassy. I got up on the roof and I could see the firefight 2 miles away. It was fierce. This was after dark when they were pulling out all the stops trying to extract the people who had been shot down, the crews of those 2 helicopters and the bodies of the soldiers that had been hit. So, I knew we had big trouble. The next morning, the full story came out both to us and to the whole world. When they finally got them out at dawn, 18 Americans had been killed. Something like 75-80 had been injured. But from our point of view, worst of all, one American, a pilot named Duran, had been taken hostage. Also, there was the famous footage of the bodies being dragged through the streets that really was political dynamite back here, understandably so.

A number of things happened very quickly. Gosende, who had been an advocate of the "go after Aidid" policy, was basically not going to be sent back. So, I lost my ambassador. The Clinton administration woke up and decided this had gotten much too nasty much too fast and wanted out. How do we get out? The State Department came up with retired Ambassador Bob Oakley and teamed him with a young, up and coming one or 2 star named Tony Zinni from the Pentagon, and sent them out to try and negotiate with the warlords, negotiate a new political arrangement with the warlords, particularly Aidid, and get the American pilot back. The American pilot was on the cover of "Time" magazine. So the next 10 days or so were just frenetic. At the end of those 10 days when we put Oakley on the plane... My embassy had also been drawn down in the course of this to the minimal staffing. It was my attaché, a colonel, and I doing most of the work. We just came back and collapsed in 2 chairs after putting him on the plane. The colonel fell asleep immediately. We had been watching CNN reports on what had happened. We were just exhausted. It was 10 days of intense negotiations and work and now suddenly we were talking to Aidid and Aidid's people. Oakley, who had been the ambassador there in the spring and had had something of a relationship with Aidid, comes across as a craggy West Virginian type. He looks and sounds tough. He and Aidid had some sort of... Aidid was impressed by him. So, he was able

to persuade Aidid that basically if Aidid released the pilot, the hunt for Aidid would stop, he would be respected as a player on the Somali scene, they wouldn't be going after him anymore, and in exchange "Give us our guys back and behave."

Q: Stop ambushing.

MCILVAINE: Yes. "Stop shooting at us." That was the tradeoff. After a week or so of shuttling back and forth with Aidid and Ali Mahdi and others and in these convoys with the armored Suburban and the 2 HUM-Vs and all the rest and a number of meetings with Aidid and his people, we got it done.

Q: Were you sitting back in our...

MCILVAINE: No, I was with them on most of this. I was there in most of the meetings. Aidid was a remarkable figure. This was the first time I had seen him. Then I saw a lot of him in the next few months. What I remember most about him was his mouth. He was very dark and he didn't have much of a chin and he had a very wide mouth with very white teeth. It always reminded me of a shark. No apparent sense of humor. My way of dealing with Somalis, which generally was quite successful, was to joke and tease with them. They all had a sense of humor and they liked to do that. It's a very verbal society. That's the way they deal with each other.

Q: As a matter of fact, they didn't really have a written language for a long time.

MCILVAINE: No. It was like Vietnamese. It wasn't written until missionaries got there and put it down on paper.

So that was the tradeoff and that was a tradeoff the administration back in Washington was happy to accept. The other remarkable thing about that was, I pointed out to Oakley that there wasn't just the American that Aidid was holding but there was also one Nigerian soldier who had been grabbed in north Mogadishu by Aidid's folks. So, Oakley took that immediately and when we went to Aidid, he said, "Not only the American pilot, but I need that Nigerian soldier." We got the Nigerian soldier back when we got the pilot back. It took about 10 days. Nigeria was immensely grateful and the soldier was, too, obviously, that somehow he hadn't been forgotten in the geopolitical rush to deal with the headlines. To Oakley's credit, he picked up on that immediately and made sure we got that Nigerian, too.

Q: How did you find being in the eye of the hurricane? Was the press intrusive? Were people calling all the time from Washington, "Why aren't you doing something?"

MCILVAINE: All of that. The press was all over the place. I remember particularly Christiane Amanpour mainly because we had a young Marine captain commanding our FAST security platoon, 40 Marines living in the old ambassador's residence. He fell passionately in love with Christiane Amanpour and followed her around like a puppy dog. It was a little hard to separate him. But yes, there was press all over the place. Yes, but Oakley was the spokesman. He basically didn't deal with them much, gave them the bare minimum. That was what they got. But

this was big news. I already had a good deal of experience of dealing with the press and learning quickly which reporters did a very serious job and really tried to find out what was happening and why and which reporters were reporting basically what they picked up at the hotel bar from other reporters. You view news organizations with those biases for your remaining years.

Q: What about Washington? Were communications of a nature where they had reached the point where they could call all the time?

MCILVAINE: Yes. There was a task force set up, of course. The great advantage we had was, we were 10 hours out of cycle with Washington, so basically we did everything in the middle of the night back here. That was our day. I remember that from when I was on the task force back in December. Of course, it was midnight when we watched everybody coming ashore at dawn in Mogadishu. But I would always have a phone call at 4:00 AM Washington time from whoever was on the task force that day and have to go over what we were doing that day and what was going on. I had Dick Moose, the then Under Secretary for Management, constantly on my back, as chargé managing this embassy, over how many people I had in-country, which was fine. It was his job and DS [Diplomatic Security] and the Washington establishment had to set the limits. I insisted it was my job to decide who within those limits I needed. That's where the squabbles came. Moose would periodically try to get me to send somebody out and I'd say, "No, I've got to have that somebody. I'll send So and So out because I can spare that person for the time being. But that one I needed." I insisted that was my prerogative. He always backed down, but Washington was not a bit averse to trying to run the embassy from 10,000 miles away.

Q: What about reporting? Was there much time to sit down and write cables?

MCILVAINE: Well, we had to - at least we felt we had to, being dutiful Foreign Service officers. This was still when... The big peril now is, so much of it goes into e-mail. But this was still a bit pre-e-mail. I think we had the old green WANGs. In the end, we had computers, so I guess we must have had e-mail, but we weren't doing it as a major means of communication. We didn't use the Internet, that's true.

Q: Did you have any feel that this was the Clinton administration, which had come into office saying, "It's the economy, stupid" and did not want to get involved in foreign affairs?

MCILVAINE: They were appalled that this had all happened and embarrassed that they hadn't been paying attention, that this had snuck up on them. Of course, the lesson there is that if you've got American troops deployed anywhere overseas, pay attention because it's a big domestic political issue immediately if anything happens. Every administration should understand that. Most do, but the Clinton administration started off a bit naive, as many do, on foreign policy. This bit them. It was their first real political embarrassment. So, the mop-up brigades were out in strength and that was Oakley's job, to "Tidy this up, get that guy off the headlines out of Aidid's jail back to Walter Reed, that pilot, and get things neat and tidy and no more Americans get shot." That was basically his informal marching orders, and that's what we did.

Q: We're talking about 18 Americans killed and 40-50 or more wounded. A hell of a lot of

Somalis were killed, weren't they?

MCILVAINE: Oh, some 300. One of the things Aidid learned very quickly was that if he killed Americans, he won with the press and the political war, and if he got Americans to kill Somalis, he won the political war. Both of those were wins. So, it was to his advantage to get as many Somalis killed as he could because he would display the bodies to the press corps, he would say, "Look what those Americans did" and make the most of it. And he had a very good Soviet-style propaganda operation. That was why the radio was so important to him. The main press corps hotel was controlled by him in his territory. He made sure they were safe, secure, and got his version of every event that happened. This all became important later on in another event.

Q: How about the UN during this time?

MCILVAINE: I think the UN was traumatized. First of all, this Aidid thing was not something... The UN was very uncomfortable with it. It's not the kind of thing the UN did or understood. It was being done by Americans. The UN wasn't being kept informed. They were very uncomfortable with it. Then all this happened and the UN mission was in danger of going up in smoke in the process.

After Oakley left, I was chargé for another 2-3 months before they rounded up Dick Bogosian and sent him out as the new ambassador. In that time, we had Oakley for a few more visits with General Zinni and Randy Beers of the NSC... Footnote: one of the intriguing things about General Zinni and about America was that he told me his father had been an Italian soldier in Somalia in World War II. He was a first generation immigrant back in Somalia as a one star and later a 4 star general and commander of CENTCOM himself. He was a very interesting guy. After it was over, I had a new mission.

Q: Let's talk about these 3 or 4 months that you were chargé after Oakley left.

MCILVAINE: My new mission was, what can we do to patch together some kind of political arrangement that will allow us to get out of here gracefully? I think it was even announced that U.S. troops would withdraw in 6 months, which meant the following March. So, we started working on putting together a conference. As it ended up, the conference was in early December in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Several things involved there. One was getting all the warlords to one place. These guys had been trying to kill each other for 2 or 3 years. They naturally weren't very trusting. Getting them all to the same place was quite a challenge. We finally did get them all to Addis except Aidid. Of course, it wasn't going to work without Aidid. He was the key. We had to get him. So, we went back and forth trying to persuade Aidid. I rounded up an attaché plane that could come down, pick him up in Mogadishu, and fly him to Addis so he could join the party. He was very suspicious of the whole idea, thought we were going to take him up - I can't imagine why - and throw him out of the plane.

Q: Mussolini did that in Ethiopia during the Italian-Ethiopian war. Nobody of that era wouldn't know that, particularly from the Horn of Africa.

MCILVAINE: He was very suspicious. It took everything we could do to persuade him and even then I was at the airstrip by the plane. He came down with 2 truckloads of gunmen. I have never seen him look so uncomfortable. He was scared. But as we told him over and over again, "The U.S. can't get rid of you. Even if we want to, we can't do it that way." Sure enough, he got on the plane and went. Then I flew up to Addis and spent a wild night... Of course, Mogadishu was 105 degrees in the shade. There was a ride going up on very short notice, so I went basically in the clothes I was wearing. Addis Ababa is at 8,000 feet. At night, it's very cool. The Ghion Hotel, the old hotel in Addis, is jam-packed with Somali warlords and I'm up there and we had Senator Warner from Virginia and Senator Levin from Michigan there on a CODEL. The UN was running these talks trying to get these guys to come to an agreement. I'm bouncing from hotel room to hotel room most of the night from the Butcher of Hargeisa to the Murderer of Kisamayu, from one thug to another, one warlord to another, as they wheel and deal.

Q: How did you communicate with them?

MCILVAINE: In English. All of them either spoke English or had somebody with them who spoke English. Language was never a problem, oddly enough. For southern Somalia, Kenya was the way out and the economics and everything else. They had all learned some English. Some of them - the Butcher of Hargeisa, for example, General Morgan, who had been a general in Siad Barre's forces, married Siad Barre's daughter and had been commanding Siad Barre's effort to absolutely level Hargeisa for being uppity and disagreeing with him - looked like a college professor. He wore a tweed jacket and smoked a pipe. He had this long beard. The one Somali touch was, the end of the beard was a little twiddle of henna, of red, which he would twiddle nervously. That indicated you had done the hajj. He had a very quiet manner. This was a guy who was a feared fighter, a warlord and atrocity committer in the first order, acting like he was doing a literature seminar on the poets of the Lake District. "What do you think of Wordsworth?" I remember another one, too, who always whipped out a bottle of scotch from a particularly obscure corner of Somalia. You wondered, "How did he get that scotch?"

Q: What about qat?

MCILVAINE: It's a narcotic leaf. That, too, was a big part of the Kenya connection. Although it's grown in Ethiopia and Yemen, it's a highland bush. It has to get there fresh, so there was a major industry in Kenya that would cut it on the slopes of Mount Kenya at 6-8,000 feet, put it in trucks, truck it to Wilson Airport, the small private plane airport outside Nairobi. They would cut it at midnight, load the trucks, get them to Wilson by dawn, load them on the twin Cessnas and these planes would just take off like a carrier flight every day flying up to Somalia. That always worked no matter what was going on. Nobody interfered with the qat trade. They'd land at various points around Somalia, cash on the barrel, issue the qat, and by midmorning in Mogadishu, the Morane, the gunmen, would have their qat.

Q: I talked to somebody who was in Yemen who said that the afternoon was...

MCILVAINE: Usually they'd get it by lunchtime. You'd have a fight in the morning and then everybody'd call it off in the afternoon to chew their qat. Then maybe they'd resume at

suppertime. It was a routine schedule.

Q: What was coming out of this conference?

MCILVAINE: It was an attempt to get them to all agree on some sort of arrangement that would lead to a government. They eventually did. They wouldn't let them out of the hotel until they agreed. Then they all went back and within days it dissolved. Then we went at it again more seriously in February and we got them all to Nairobi and did it in Nairobi with Lansana Kuyate, the UN deputy, who was a Guinean, a very gifted diplomat, and who had been quite critical of our approach to Aidid, saying, "We've got to include him. He's got to be part of the deal or it won't work." We tried that. We had another longer conference in Nairobi in February and this time got another deal. They came back and generally behaved waiting for the last 2 weeks of March when the U.S. troops withdrew. As soon as the U.S. troops were gone, Aidid grabbed somebody else's town south of Mogadishu and it all broke down. That was the killer. When that happened and we began to get rounds of daily interclan fighting again within the city... Our corner of the compound was the boundary between the Medina District, which a new warlord, Musa Sudi, had established himself in, and Aidid's folks above us. At one point we had the firefights going on right around the corner of our wall, guys waving at our Marines in the sentry boxes on the wall, "Hi," and then they'd fire off a burst, poke around the wall... If it hadn't been so lethal and so sad, it was comical. I think one of the things that particularly affected us, the folks working at the embassy and a couple of young political reporters - 3, in fact - and aid workers and everybody else was that we had gotten to know a lot of Somalis who were and saw themselves as the victims of this, desperate to get on with something resembling a normal life, and they just couldn't get rid of these guys. You couldn't take all the warlords, put them in a bag, and throw them in the ocean. That's ultimately what you needed to do, but nobody could do that, nobody was willing to do that for obvious reasons.

At the end of March, a big fleet offshore, all the U.S. troops withdraw. So now it's just the UN troops and me and Ambassador Bogosian and our Marines in this compound. And then the fighting starts again, but not with us. It's between them. At that point, we're seeing this and deciding we can't fix this. Bogosian finally leaves, having agreed to do 6 months, period. Dan Simpson comes as the last of my 4 ambassadors in my brief year in Mogadishu. He comes out having talked to everybody in Washington and he doesn't tell me this but his mission is pretty clearly to shut this down. Even I, as the last champion of somehow saving Somalia, have to agree that basically we made two determined efforts to get these guys to reach some kind of agreement. Each time it's broken down. They're not going to do it. There's no point in keeping our people at risk in what's getting to be an increasingly dangerous environment not targeted against us but just the loose fire around. So, in August, we closed the embassy and left.

I went to Washington.

Q: By the way, what did we do with our local employees?

MCILVAINE: Tough one. You give them money and try to help them with visas wherever we can, those that want them. But a number of them stayed and to this day I'm not sure what

happened to them.

Q: Was there much of a Somali community in the U.S. at that point?

MCILVAINE: Oh, yes. A lot had fled the civil war in '90/'91. Aidid's son... One of Aidid's wives was in San Diego with her son. Her son was of age, became a Marine, and went over in the first batch of Marines to Somalia until somebody realized, "Wait a minute. This isn't a good idea." So they sent him back to garrison duty and he finished out his Marine tour. Two years after I left, Aidid was killed and now Aidid's son has replaced him back in Mogadishu as head of the Habir Gedr clan.

So we decide in June that this is hopeless. We're going to get the U.S. out. I leave at the end of July. I go back to Washington and go into the bureau as Somalia coordinator and spend my first bit there closing down the embassy and getting all the assets out and getting all the people out and making sure all of that's tidied up and the lights are turned off.

Then, we've still got 15,000 UN troops there on a mission we created, we pushed the UN to do, and they don't know how to get out. They don't have any way of getting out. They don't have ships or planes or anything that can get them out. So I formed a cabal with the Political-Military Bureau, a couple of people in there, and some people at Defense, and we started putting together a group to persuade Defense particularly and the U.S. government in general that we, the U.S., need to make the UN's departure possible. That took about 2 or 3 months of bureaucratic maneuvering. The Pentagon really didn't want anything more to do with Somalia. The whole idea was a dirty word in the Pentagon. From their point of view, all they had done was gotten some people killed and there was major embarrassment. But eventually we were able to persuade the policymakers - and General Zinni was a major hand in this - that this was something that we had to do. We had gotten them in and we had to get them out. Zinni, by then a 3 star, went up fast, commanded it, and I went over and in just about a year later in March we sent in a large Powell-style overwhelming U.S. force offshore and into the beach to secure the beach, evacuate all the UN troops, and then leave. That was the final step.

Q: Were people involved with the UN able to go out at that time, too?

MCILVAINE: Part of the problem with Somalis is, they are extremely tough desert nomads and they are survivors. Those that thought they had no way of surviving in Mogadishu without the UN did indeed find ways to go out. Some of them became UN staff. Some of them became refugees. Some of them got visas to here and are probably here.

Q: While you were working with this group to get the UN out, the UN must have been pounding on the United States to do something about it. At that point, they knew they were leaving, too.

MCILVAINE: Well, yes, they had recognized also that the political reconciliation process was going nowhere, that they weren't able to solve this political problem. And they simply... The UN has no navy. Other than the U.S., there is no country with the naval resources able to do a major offshore evacuation. The other possibility was by air with cargo air but that's very expensive and

the airport is right in Mogadishu and a political football that the clans love to fight over, so if you've got nobody on the ground securing it, the planes can't come in. So how do you get the last contingent that's holding the fort out if you do it by air? The answer was to do it by sea. We also did a diplomatic thing. Again Oakley... We went out and talked to all the warlords and said, "Don't mess with this. You'll get what you want. It's over. We're gone. But if we have any trouble with this, anybody shoots at us as we're going out the door, we'll hit you with everything we've got." That might have been an empty threat. I'm not sure we would have. But they didn't and we got out.

Q: When you came back from Mogadishu, did anybody debrief you?

MCILVAINE: I had been talking to them on the phone every day. A lot of insecurity. Washington was infinitely nervous they were going to get somebody hurt. I admit, that was my major... I remember the sense of relief when I finally did leave Mogadishu for the last time and got on the little plane down to Nairobi. As we lifted off, I realized that now it's not on my head if somebody gets hurt after a year of being responsible for this group that went from 5 or 6 to 80 to back to 5 or 6 to 80, that was constantly expanding and contracting depending on whether the climate was good or not. It was a constant concern to get my folks through that without getting anybody hurt.

Q: When you came back, did you find that Somalia had become in the State Department and in the Department of Defense a really bad word signifying "Let's not get involved in any of these foreign..."

MCILVAINE: In the policy level, yes, and then it was immediately reaffirmed because we're talking now spring of '94. I got a couple of weeks leave. I went to Nairobi, where I had my family. I managed to find through Kenyan friends a house and rented a house in Kenya and had my family there because I knew I'd never see them if they were in the States. I'd never get back to the States. I was able to get out of Somalia every month or 6 weeks for a weekend or so and see them in Kenya. I came back and had a couple of weeks off and we went on a safari. As we were driving back from the south towards Nairobi where the international airport is, I see this giant C5A going in and I know immediately that they're evacuating Rwanda because that's what they would be bringing the plane in for and I'd read that the two presidents had been shot down and killed and that the emergency had started in Rwanda. There was just no question that the U.S. would not intervene in that no matter how bad it got at that point because it was so fresh after Somalia and political wounds were such that neither the White House nor the Pentagon would countenance it. It was a political non-starter even though in retrospect it probably would have been relatively cheap and easy to do.

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Ms. Anyaso was born and raised in North Carolina and was educated at Morgan State University and American University. She joined the State Department in 1968, where she specialized in Education and Cultural Affairs, with particular regard to African countries. She had several tours in Washington as well as abroad. Her foreign assignments include Lagos, Abuja, Port-au-Prince and Niamey, where she served primarily as Cultural and Public Affairs Officer. Ms. Anyaso was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2009.

Q: Okay what was happening in East Africa particularly that got your attention?

ANYASO: Believe it or not it was Somalia. I spent a lot of time on Somalia and worked very closely with the State Department East Africa office because they were concerned that the military was looking too closely at Somalia and wanted to go in and do something; have some kind of kinetic operation. So I was on the military side writing reports, in meetings, talking about the situation and actually facilitating meetings bringing in academics to talk about Somalia. The feeling at that point was we (the State Department) didn't want the military to really go in to Somalia.

Q: It's one of those things where in a completely disorganized thing you can't do anything you just get involved in the turmoil.

ANYASO: Exactly.

Q: Yes.

ANYASO: It was just a no win situation. The two countries they were looking at, of course, one was Iraq and one was Somalia and we kept saying well don't look at Somalia, don't do that; so that took up a lot of time. As usual, the Somalis were having a big national conference trying to get government in place and it just never seemed to work but there was that.

End of reader