

## Battle of Mogadishu (1993)

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*Part of Operation Gothic Serpent and the Somali Civil War*

The Battle of Mogadishu, more commonly referred to as **Black Hawk Down** or, locally, as the Day of the Rangers (Somali: Maalintii Rangers), was part of Operation Gothic Serpent and was fought on 3 and 4 October 1993, in Mogadishu, Somalia, between forces of the United States supported by UNOSOM II, and Somali militiamen loyal to the self-proclaimed president-to-be Mohamed Farrah Aidid who had support from armed civilian fighters.

A U.S. Army force in Mogadishu, consisting primarily of U.S. Army Rangers from Bravo Company, 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment; C Squadron, 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment-Delta (1st SFOD-D), better known as "Delta Force"; as well as Air Force Combat Controllers and Air Force Pararescuemen and helicopters from 1st Battalion, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, attempted to seize two of Aidid's high-echelon lieutenants during a meeting in the city. Shortly after the assault began, Somali militia and armed civilian fighters shot down two UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters. The subsequent operation to secure and recover the crews of both helicopters drew the raid, intended to last no more than an hour, into an overnight standoff in the city. The battle resulted in 18 deaths, 80 wounded, and one helicopter pilot captured among the U.S. raid party and rescue forces. One Pakistani soldier and one Malaysian soldier were killed as part of the rescue forces. American sources estimate between 1,500 and 3,000 Somali casualties, including civilians; SNA forces claim only 315 killed, with 812 wounded. The battle is now referred to as the First Battle of Mogadishu to distinguish it from the Second Battle of Mogadishu of 2006.

Task Force Ranger—which consisted of an assault force made up of U.S. Army Delta Force operators, Army Rangers, Air Force Pararescuemen, Air Force Combat Controllers, four Navy SEALs from the Naval Special Warfare Development Group, and an air element provided by the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment—under Major General William F. Garrison's command executed an operation that involved traveling from their compound on the city's outskirts to the center with the aim of capturing the leaders of the Habr Gidr clan, led by warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid. The assault force consisted of nineteen aircraft, twelve vehicles (including nine Humvees), and 160 men.



*U.S. Marine Corps helicopter surveying a residential area in Mogadishu as part of Operation Restore Hope (1992).*

During the operation, two U.S. Black Hawk helicopters were shot down by RPGs and three others were damaged. Some of the wounded survivors were able to evacuate to the compound, but others remained near the crash sites and were isolated. An urban battle ensued throughout the night.

Early the next morning, a combined task force was sent to rescue the trapped soldiers. It contained soldiers from the Pakistan Army, the Malaysian Army and the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division. They assembled some hundred vehicles, including Pakistani tanks (M48s) and Malaysian Condor armored personnel carriers and were supported by U.S. MH-6 Little Bird and MH-60L Black Hawk helicopters. This task force reached the first crash site and rescued the survivors. The second crash site had been overrun by hostile Somalis during the night. Delta snipers Gary Gordon and Randy Shughart volunteered to hold them off until ground forces arrived. A Somali mob with thousands of combatants eventually overran the two men. That site's lone surviving American, pilot Michael Durant, had been taken prisoner but was later released.

The exact number of Somali casualties is unknown, but estimates range from several hundred to over a thousand militiamen and others killed,[7][8] with injuries to another 3,000–4,000.[9] The International Committee of the Red Cross estimated 200 Somali civilians killed and several hundred wounded in the fighting,[10] with reports that some civilians attacked the Americans.[11] The book *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War* estimates more than 700 Somali militiamen dead and more than 1,000 wounded, but the Somali National Alliance in a Frontline documentary on American television acknowledged only 133 killed in the whole battle.[12] The Somali casualties were reported in *The Washington Post* as 312 killed and 814 wounded.[2] The Pentagon initially reported five American soldiers were killed,[13] but the toll was actually 18 American soldiers dead and 73 wounded. Two days later, a 19th soldier, Delta operator SFC Matt Rierson, was killed in a mortar attack. Among U.N. forces, one Malaysian and one Pakistani died; seven Malaysians and two Pakistanis were wounded. At the time, the battle was the bloodiest involving U.S. troops since the Vietnam War and remained so until the Second Battle of Fallujah in 2004.

On 24 July 1996, Aidid was wounded during a firefight between his militia and forces loyal to warlords and former Aidid allies, Ali Mahdi Muhammad and Osman Ali Atto. He suffered a fatal heart attack on 1 August 1996, either during or after surgery to treat his wounds.[14] The following day, General Garrison retired.[15]

Operation Provide Relief began in August 1992, when the U.S. President George H. W. Bush announced that U.S. military transports would support the multinational U.N. relief effort in Somalia. Ten C-130s and 400 people were deployed to Mombasa, Kenya, airlifting aid to Somalia's remote areas and reducing reliance on truck convoys. One member of the 86th Supply Squadron, USAFE's only contribution to the operation, was deployed with the ground support contingent. The C-130s delivered 48,000 tons of food and medical supplies in six months to international humanitarian organizations trying to help Somalia's more than three million starving people.[18]

When this proved inadequate to stop the massive death and displacement of the Somali people (500,000 dead and 1.5 million refugees or displaced), the U.S. launched a major coalition operation to assist and protect humanitarian activities in December 1992. This operation, called Operation Restore Hope, saw the U.S. assuming the unified command in accordance with Resolution 794. The U.S. Marine Corps landed the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit in Mogadishu and, with elements of 1st Battalion, 7th Marines and 3rd Battalion, 11th Marines, secured nearly one-third of the city, the port, and airport

facilities within two weeks, with the intent to facilitate airlifted humanitarian supplies. Elements of the 2nd Battalion; HMLA-369 (Helicopter Marine Light Assault-369 of Marine Aircraft Group-39, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, Camp Pendleton); 9th Marines; and 1st Battalion, 7th Marines quickly secured routes to Baidoa, Balidogle and Kismayo, then were reinforced by the 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion and the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division.[18]

On 8 August 1993, Aidid's militia detonated a remote controlled bomb against a U.S. military vehicle, killing four soldiers. Two weeks later another bomb injured seven more.[27] In response, U.S. President Bill Clinton approved the proposal to deploy a special task force composed of 400 U.S. Army Rangers and Delta Force operators.[28] This unit, named Task Force Ranger, consisted of 160 elite U.S. troops.

On 22 August, the unit deployed to Somalia under the command of Major General William F. Garrison, commander of Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) at the time.

At around 02:00 on 25 September, Aidid's men shot down a 101st Airborne Division Black Hawk with an RPG and killed three crew members at New Port near Mogadishu. The shootdown was a huge SNA psychological victory.[30][31]



*The crew of Super 64 a month before the Battle of Mogadishu. From left: Winn Mahuron, Tommy Field, Bill Cleveland, Ray Frank and Mike Durant.*

The size and organizational structure of the Somali militia forces involved in the battle are not known in detail. In all, between 2,000–4,000 regular faction members are believed to have participated, almost all of whom belonged to Aidid's Somali National Alliance. They drew largely from his Habar Gidir Hawiye clan, who battled U.S. troops starting 12 July 1993.[39]

The Somali National Alliance (SNA) was formed 14 August 1992. It began as the United Somali Congress (USC) under Aidid's leadership. At the time of Operation Gothic Serpent, the SNA was composed of Col. Omar Gess' Somali Patriotic Movement, the Somali Democratic Movement, the combined Digil and Mirifleh clans, the Habr Gedir of the United Somali Congress headed by Aidid, and the newly established Southern Somali National Movement.

After formation, the SNA immediately staged an assault against the militia of the Hawadle Hawiye clan, who controlled the Mogadishu port area. As a result, the Hawadle Hawiye were pushed out of the area, and Aidid's forces took control.[40]

On Sunday - 3 October 1993, Task Force Ranger, U.S. special operations forces composed mainly of Bravo Company 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment-Delta (better known as "Delta Force") operators, and the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment

(Airborne) ("The Night Stalkers"), attempted to capture Aidid's foreign minister Omar Salad Elmi and his top political advisor, Mohamed Hassan Awale.[41]



Map of key sites in Mogadishu during the battle.

The plan was that Delta operators would assault the target building (using MH-6 Little Bird helicopters) and secure the targets inside the building while four Ranger chinks (under CPT Michael D. Steele's command) would fast rope down from hovering MH-60L Black Hawk helicopters. The Rangers would then create a four-corner defensive perimeter around the building while a column of nine HMMWVs and three M939 five-ton trucks (under LTC Danny McKnight's command) would arrive at the building to take the entire assault team and their prisoners back to base. The entire operation was estimated to take no longer than 30 minutes.[42]

The ground-extraction convoy was supposed to reach the captive targets a few minutes after the operation's beginning. However, it

ran into delays. Somali citizens and local militia formed barricades along Mogadishu's streets with rocks, wreckage, rubbish and burning tires, blocking the convoy from reaching the Rangers and their captives. Aidid militiamen with megaphones were shouting, "Kasoobaxa guryaha oo iska celsa cadowga!" ("Come out and defend your homes!").[43]

## The Raid

At 13:50, Task Force Ranger analysts receive intelligence of Salad's location.

At 15:42, the MH-6 assault Little Birds carrying the Delta operators hit the target, the wave of dust becoming so bad that one was forced to go around again and land out of position. Next, the two Black Hawks carrying the second Delta assault team came into position and dropped their teams as the four Ranger chinks prepared to rope onto the four corners surrounding the target building. By mistake, Chalk Four being carried by Black Hawk callsign Super 67, piloted by CW3 Jeff Niklaus, was accidentally put in a block north of their intended point. Declining the pilot's offer to move them back down due to the time

it would take to do so, leaving the helicopter too exposed, Chalk Four intended to move down to the planned position, but intense ground fire prevented them from doing so.

The ground convoy arrives ten minutes later near the Olympic Hotel and wait for Delta and Rangers to complete their mission (target building).

During the operation's first moments, Ranger PFC Todd Blackburn, from Chalk Four, fell while fast-roping from his Black Hawk Super 67 while it was hovering 70 feet (21 m) above the streets. The film *Black Hawk Down* shows that he slipped when the helicopter was forced to take evasive maneuvers to avoid an incoming RPG fired from a nearby rooftop, although, according to Bowden, video does not show the helicopter moving. Blackburn suffered an injury to his head and back of his neck and required evacuation by SGT Jeff Struecker's column of three Humvees. While taking PFC Todd Blackburn back to base, SGT Dominick Pilla, assigned to SGT Struecker's Humvee, was killed instantly when a bullet entered his head.[44] When SGT Struecker's Humvee column reached the base and safety, all three vehicles were riddled with bullet holes and smoking.[43]

At about 16:20, one of the Black Hawk helicopters, callsign Super 61 piloted by CW3 Cliff "Elvis" Wolcott and CW3 Donovan Briley, was shot down by an RPG. Both pilots were killed in the resulting crash and two of the crew chiefs were severely wounded. SSG Daniel Busch and SGT Jim Smith, both Delta snipers, survived the crash and began defending the site.

An MH-6, callsign Star 41 and piloted by CW3 Karl Maier and CW5 Keith Jones, landed nearby and Jones left the helicopter and carried Busch to the safety of the Helo while Maier provided cover fire from the Little Bird's cockpit, repeatedly denying order to lift off while his co-pilot was not in the Bird. He nearly hit Chalk One's LT DiTomo arriving with Rangers and Delta operators to secure the site. Jones and Maier evacuated SSG Busch and SGT Smith, though SSG Busch later died of his injuries, being shot four times while defending the crash site.

A Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) team, led by Air Force Pararescueman TSgt Scott Fales, were able to fast rope down to Super 61's crash site despite an RPG hit that crippled their helicopter, Super 68, piloted by CW3 Dan Jollota. Despite the damage, Super 68 did make it back to base. The CSAR team found both the pilots dead and two wounded inside the crashed helicopter. Under intense fire, the team moved the wounded men to a nearby collection point, where they built a makeshift shelter using Kevlar armor plates salvaged from Super 61's wreckage.[45]

There was confusion between the ground convoy and the assault team. The assault team and the ground convoy waited for 20 minutes to receive their orders to move out. Both units were under the mistaken impression that they were to be first contacted by the other. During the wait, a second Black Hawk helicopter, callsign Super 64 and piloted by CW3 Michael Durant, was shot down by an RPG at around 16:40.[46]

Most of the assault team went to the first crash site for a rescue operation. Upon reaching the site, about 90 Rangers and Delta Force operators found themselves under heavy fire. Despite air support, the assault team was effectively trapped for the night. With a growing number of wounded needing shelter,

they occupied several nearby houses and confined the occupants for the battle's duration.[47] Outside, a stiff breeze stirred up blinding, brown clouds of dust.

At the second crash site, two Delta snipers, MSG Gary Gordon and SFC Randy Shughart, were inserted by Black Hawk Super 62 – piloted by CW3 Mike Goffena. Their first two requests to be inserted were denied, but they were finally granted permission upon their third request. They inflicted heavy casualties on the approaching Somali mob. Super 62 had kept up their fire support for MSG Gordon and SFC Shughart, but an RPG struck Super 62. Despite the damage, Super 62 managed to go to the New Port and safety. When MSG Gordon was eventually killed, SFC Shughart picked up Gordon's CAR-15 and gave it to Super 64 pilot CW3 Michael Durant. SFC Shughart went back around the chopper's nose and held off the mob for about 10 more minutes before he was killed. The Somalis then overran the crash site and killed all but Durant. He was nearly beaten to death, but was saved when members of Aidid's militia came to take him prisoner.[46] For their actions, MSG Gordon and SFC Shughart were posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, the first awarded since the Vietnam War.[32]

Repeated attempts by the Somalis to mass forces and overrun the American positions in a series of firefights near the first crash site were neutralized by aggressive small arms fire and by strafing runs and rocket attacks from AH-6J Little Bird helicopter gunships of the Nightstalkers, the only air unit equipped for and trained for night fighting.

The battle was over by 06:30 on Monday, 4 October. U.S. forces were finally evacuated to the U.N. base by the armored convoy. While leaving the crash site, a group of Rangers and Delta operators realized that there was no room left in the vehicles for them and were forced to depart the city on foot to a rendezvous point on National Street. This has been commonly referred to as the "Mogadishu Mile". U.S. forces suffered one casualty during the mile, Sgt. Randal J. Ramaglia, after he was hit by a bullet in the back, and successfully evacuated.[48]

In all, 18 U.S. soldiers were killed in action during the battle and another 73 were wounded in action.[49] The Malaysian forces lost one soldier and had seven injured, while the Pakistanis suffered two injured. Somali casualties were heavy, with estimates on fatalities ranging from 315[50] to over 2,000 combatants. The Somali casualties were a mixture of militiamen and local civilians. Somali civilians suffered heavy casualties due to the dense urban character of that portion of Mogadishu. Two days later, a mortar round fell on the U.S. compound, killing one U.S. soldier, SFC Matt Rierson, and injuring another twelve. A team on special mission to Durant's Super 64 helicopter had 2 wounded, Boxerman and James on 6 October.[51]

## Aftermath

After the battle, the bodies of several of the conflict's U.S. casualties (Black Hawk Super 64's crewmembers and their protectors, Delta Force soldiers MSG Gordon and SFC Shughart) were dragged through Mogadishu's streets by crowds of local civilians and SNA forces.[53] Through negotiation and threats to the Habr Gidr clan leaders by ambassador Robert B. Oakley, all the bodies were eventually recovered. The bodies were returned in horrible condition, one with a severed head. Michael Durant

was released after 11 days of captivity. On the beach near the base, a memorial was held for those who were killed in combat.[54]

Reliable estimates place the number of Somali insurgents killed at between 800 to as many as 1,000 with perhaps another 4,000 wounded. Somali militants, however, claimed a much lower casualty rate.[57] Aidid himself claimed that only 315 – civilians and militia – were killed and 812 wounded.[58] Captain Haad, in an interview on American public television, said 133 of the SNA militia were killed.[5]

In a national security policy review session held in the White House on 6 October 1993, U.S. President Bill Clinton directed the Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral David E. Jeremiah, to stop all actions by U.S. forces against Aidid except those required in self-defense. He reappointed Ambassador Robert B. Oakley as special envoy to Somalia in an attempt to broker a peace settlement and then announced that all U.S. forces would withdraw from Somalia no later than 31 March 1994. On 15 December 1993, U.S. Secretary of Defense Les Aspin stepped down, taking much of the blame for his decision to refuse requests for tanks and armored vehicles in support of the mission.[71][72] A few hundred U.S. Marines remained offshore to assist with any noncombatant evacuation mission that might occur regarding the 1,000-plus U.S. civilians and military advisers remaining as part of the U.S. liaison mission.

The Ready Battalion of the 24th Infantry Division, 1–64 Armor, was sent from Fort Stewart, Georgia, to Mogadishu to provide heavy armored support for U.S. forces. On 16 December 1993, Joint Task Force United Shield was approved by Clinton and launched on 14 January 1994. On 7 February 1994, the Fleet arrived and began the withdrawal of UNOSOM-II's forces. The U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 897, which redeployed military assets to cover the U.N. troops' withdrawal from Somalia. On 6 March 1994, all of the remaining U.N. troops were withdrawn, ending UNOSOM-II. On 24 April 1994, Boutros-Ghali admitted defeat and declared the U.N. Mission was over.[73]

## Policy changes and political implications

*US president Bill Clinton presenting the Medal of Honor to the widow of Master Sergeant Gary I. Gordon, who served as Sniper Team Leader in the United States Army Special Operation Command with Task Force Ranger in Mogadishu.*



**The mission in Somalia was seen by many as a failure.**[74] The Clinton administration in particular endured considerable criticism for the operation's outcome. The main elements of the criticism surround the administration's decision to leave the region before completing the operation's humanitarian and security objectives, as well as the perceived failure to recognize the threat Al-Qaida elements posed in the region as well as the threat against U.S. security interests at home.[75] Critics claim that Osama bin Laden and other members of Al-Qaida provided support and training to Mohammed Farrah Aidid's forces. Osama bin Laden even denigrated the administration's decision to prematurely depart the region stating that it displayed "the weakness, feebleness and cowardliness of the US soldier".[76]

The loss of U.S. military personnel during the Black Hawk Down operation evoked public outcry. Television images of American soldiers being dragged through the streets by Somalis were too graphic for the American public to endure. **The Clinton administration responded by scaling down U.S. humanitarian efforts in the region.**[76]

On 26 September 2006, in an interview on Fox News with Chris Wallace, former President Bill Clinton gave his version of events surrounding the mission in Somalia. Clinton defended his exit strategy for U.S. forces and denied that the departure was premature. He said conservative Republicans had pushed him to leave the region before the operation's objectives could be achieved: "...[Conservative Republicans] were all trying to get me to withdraw from Somalia in 1993 the next day after we were involved in 'Black Hawk down,' and I refused to do it and stayed six months and had an orderly transfer to the United Nations." [77]

Clinton's remarks would suggest the U.S. was not deterred from pursuing their humanitarian goals because of the loss of U.S. forces during Black Hawk Down. In the same interview, he stated that, at the time, nobody thought Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaida had anything to do with Black Hawk Down's events. He said the mission was strictly humanitarian. [77]

**Fear of a repeat of the events in Somalia shaped U.S. policy in subsequent years**, with many commentators identifying the Battle of Mogadishu's graphic consequences as the key reason behind the U.S.'s failure to intervene in later conflicts such as the Rwandan Genocide of 1994. After the battle, the bodies of several U.S. casualties of the conflict were dragged through Mogadishu's streets by crowds of local civilians and members of Aidid's Somali National Alliance. According to the U.S.'s former deputy special envoy to Somalia, Walter Clarke: "The ghosts of Somalia continue to haunt US policy. Our lack of response in Rwanda was a fear of getting involved in something like a Somalia all over again." [78]

"Battle of Mogadishu (1993)." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, 16 Dec. 2013. Web. 17 Dec. 2013. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_Mogadishu\\_\(1993\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Mogadishu_(1993))>.