The TFR J2 collection plan was a matrix designed to quickly highlight collection integration options. Considerable effort was spent to ensure that the plan accurately reflected limitations, capabilities, availability, and planning factors for synchronization.

COL McKnight and I discussed the best way to organize the J2 work area in order to streamline intelligence support. He thought that we would face two potential scenarios. One was a case in which intelligence upon which we could act would occur with little to no warning, i.e., something to which we would have to react with little ability to control. The second was a case in which we set the conditions and against which we could preplan a collection framework. The environment would present both scenarios throughout the deployment. However, the longer we were there, the greater possibility that we would develop an ability to cause events vice react to them.

The ability to create conditions was preferable so that we could exploit our strengths of speed, surprise, and violence of action, and do it at night, our optimum mission time. However, throughout TFR, our leaders faced the challenge of executing direct action missions when the targets developed. Many targets developed during daylight, e.g., Otto Capture, 3-4 October Salad House. Hard decisions were required to balance the capabilities of the force, the risks to the force, and the importance of prosecuting targets in less than optimum conditions.

The CG and J3 agreed with his analysis. As such, an arbitrary target time to react with a launch of a direct action force was set at 20-25 minutes. In other words, from pre-launch to launched in 25 minutes or less. This
standard was consistently met unless target development/tracking did not require the compressed launch sequence.

The value of the templated operational concepts was the ability to automatically configure assault forces in a matter of minutes. Every combination had been extensively rehearsed. There was nothing ad hoc about this structure. The challenge for the J2 was to prepare target data for the operators on the same compressed timeline and orchestrate collection assets to find and track a target and protect the direct action force.

There were two parts to the J2 problem. One was integration and communications among/between intelligence assets. The second was a process to quickly and accurately provide the intelligence update to assault forces. TFR J2 and subordinate unit intelligence personnel approached this as a common challenge.

Integration of intelligence assets was accomplished in two ways: physical and electronic. There were notable successes. In a significant departure from prior operations, every resource agreed to physically collocate and terminate communications. This room was called “Room 1.” The act of coming to work automatically exposed each J2 person to parallel streams of information from multiple sources. In addition, “Room 1” was the entry point into the TFR J2 for non-TFR information, e.g., CISE CI teams not under control of TFR J2.

The value of this arrangement was immediately evident. The TFR J2 and associated support units rarely had more than 10 people per shift. Situational awareness and cross cueing were facilitated. It was automatic to draw upon a wide range of experience to relate to events that occurred
and to quickly identify options. Physical collocation caused automatic cueing, often without any extra effort to do so. "Room 1" also executed mission management, asset management, and coordinated maintenance and support for intelligence assets, e.g., refueling of airborne assets. Mission schedules were posted for all assets as well as critical planning factors, surge capabilities, emergency measures, escape and recovery data, etc.
My normal place was in “Room 1.” This has since come to be informally called “the big giant spider” concept. As the initial entry point for information, it was the first sanity check. We began to receive a lot of information. Much of it was valuable for general situation development and familiarity. Much of it was pure trash. Our job was to orchestrate collection, synchronize the effort, and do a first cut on information, e.g., separate the wheat from the chaff, and then apply collection assets against the wheat.

“Room 2” was the targeting room. There were two terminations for surveillance resources there (overflow from “Room 1”). A series of 3’ by 3’ foam boards with imagery of known/suspected target sites, e.g., grandstand, Olympic Hotel, etc., were made. Of course, Murphy’s Law says that the target board you built was not the target board you needed. Blank boards were available and built as required to meet mission needs. Several systems were able to send real time target photos. “Room 2” was the second level of sanity check. Targeting information came from “Room 1” to “Room 2” while concurrent efforts to vector resources to confirm/deny the target or begin target overwatch began. Target boards were available and used for assault and reaction forces.

When justified by additional intelligence, the target boards were passed out to subordinate unit planning areas near the Joint Operations Center (JOC). At this point (but usually before) assault forces were notified and subordinate unit intelligence personnel and operations personnel implemented whichever templated direct action profile was selected.

This is not as linear a process as I describe. Subordinate unit intelligence personnel ranged freely
between “Rooms 1 and 2.” Subordinate unit operations personnel generally avoided “Room 1.” However, as activity generated and passed to “Room 2,” intelligence personnel worked around subordinate unit operations planners. The constraints of space made this an impediment, but since our operators were only trying to get ahead of a potential mission during which their lives were at stake, we found it hard to complain too much. Also, operator presence often ensured the target board was a more complete product when it left “Room 2.”

The obvious question is, “How many times did this happen?” I attempted to confirm my memory with JSOC J2. However, no one from TFR is still there and the files are no longer available. As I recall, from our arrival on 26 August until our launch authority was cancelled by USCENTCOM on 4 October, “Room 1” received hundreds of potential items. Efforts were made to confirm or deny, discount as not possible, or ignore. “Room 1” found initially credible information that was confirmed or deemed possible on 54 occasions. Of the 54 times, 35 were sent to “Room 2.” “Room 1” continued to work to confirm or deny and track intelligence once an item went to “Room 2.” Of the 35 that “Room 2” received, it sent targeting boards out to the JOC planning areas 24 times. The other 11 times were cancelled based on additional intelligence efforts that failed to confirm or deny activity or loss of surveillance on a potential target. This resulted in seven bona fide direct action missions and a number of OPSEC “profile flights.” The next obvious question is, “What constituted validity to move from “Room 1” to “Room 2?” For example, one of the CISE CI teams was given a list of SNA leaders we wanted to find. Less than two hours after
the CI team passed the list to one of its low-level sources, the source came to it and said that every one on the list was currently drinking tea at the Olympic Hotel. Obviously, a Somali source trying to tell us what he thought we wanted to hear. Especially since we had information that said at least two of the people on the list were at other places. The discussion of 3-4 October’s mission against the Salad House describes what happened when information was considered credible and details the efforts to confirm, deny, and maintain target continuity.

**Intelligence Operations in Mogadishu**

A detailed discussion of intelligence assets and contributions in support of TFR is not possible in an unclassified document. The following sections will detail some challenges to collection and some notable successes and failures. *In general, high technology applications will not always overcome a low to no technology environment.* This is hard for many contemporary military people and organizations to accept, but it is true. TFR had an awesome state-of-the-art collection capability and tremendous precision yet we never completely overcame the low to no technology environment.

**Imagery Intelligence (IMINT)**

This section includes imagery and surveillance assets. We had access to a full range of national-level imagery platforms, products, and support. However, our area of operations was urban and cluttered. National imagery capabilities were of minimal value. I predict that our national-level imagery capabilities will have to rethink
support concepts to meet the challenges of urban operations.

TFR deployed with a wide range of other imagery and surveillance tools. These were of critical value in cueing, tip-off, confirmation, situation development, target identification and development, force protection, and post-mission assessment.

The array of surveillance assets with TFR provided an exceptional capability to surveil multiple targets. This was a major advantage for intelligence personnel, but more importantly, for commanders. There was a natural blurring of the distinction between intelligence and command and control (C²). Systems deployed primarily for reconnaissance and surveillance became outstanding tools to allow commanders a real-time view of the battlefield and to enhance battle command.

However, on the negative side, most assets were subject to the limitations of battery life, station time, and terrain. The urban environment made tracking mobile targets difficult as trees, vegetation, and clutter were challenges that were not always overcome. Some systems were subject to degradation by darkness and cloud cover. That said, the capabilities of our systems generally provided some kind of coverage regardless of conditions.

*Signals Intelligence (SIGINT)*

SIGINT assets were available and very good. 513th MI Brigade tactical assets (ESM and ECM) operated as fixed sites under the CISE. The environment supported a more or less static operation for mobile tactical systems. The strength of the 513th operation was a balance of good collectors and good first phase analysis at the CISE. This
was an important capability that TFR transitioned from the CISE to TFR J2.

There were several airborne SIGINT platforms based out of country and supporting TFR. These systems were linked into "Room 1" and there was both an electronic and physical intercept and direction finding "flash net."

Additionally, we had a SIGINT Research & Development capability provided to TFR. This allowed us to have people who took SIGINT expertise and technology, watched it on the ground, and then adapted it to the environment of Mogadishu.

**Vignette 7**

Our fourth direct action mission occurred on 17 September 1993. It was targeted at Radio Aideed. Radio Aideed emanated from an unknown location in central Mogadishu. It was a FM signal, relatively low power. The Radio Aideed came on the air each evening shortly after 1800 and went off the air shortly before 2100. The broadcasts were virulent anti-UN and anti-US propaganda. We targeted it as part of the infrastructure list.

For several nights, we applied SIGINT and surveillance assets against the station. While our direction finding accuracy was good, the cluttered environment meant that our best accuracy encompassed several blocks of Mogadishu.

Finally, we went for simplicity beyond complexity. We wrapped WD-1 telephone wire around a broomstick as an antenna, attached it to a signal strength test receiver and put the assembly in a helicopter. The helicopter was cued by direction finding assets into the general area and then used the fabricated antenna and receiver to find an aural
null. This refined the location down to a building and what looked to be an antenna.

We launched a direct action mission to neutralize the station. The mission went to the identified site and found out the “antenna” was a derelict light pole and the building was empty. The location of the target was deep in Aideed’s territory and this “dry hole” was quickly left. However, we continued to watch the area and on 19 September we used helicopter gun cameras to watch Radio Aideed’s antenna erected by two Somalis on the roof of the building directly across the street (less than 30 feet) from the derelict light pole and building we hit.

We briefed MG Garrison. His decision was to keep Radio Aideed on the target list but not to attack it since it was so close to a place that we had recently been and which was so close to Aideed’s stronghold. That and the fact that Radio Aideed’s message was locally contained prevented another attack.

**Human Intelligence (HUMINT)**

The US does not do HUMINT at all well. For whatever reasons, we have become a nation with almost no capability in a fundamental aspect of intelligence. We spend billions of dollars on technology and “stuff.” We ignore HUMINT even more than we do analysis and linguistic skills.

One of our challenges—past—present—future, is to interpret events to find out what they mean. IMINT and SIGINT technology provides the “what.” HUMINT affords a window to the “why,” the “what for,” and the “what does it mean in this culture and environment.” Successful intelligence support for virtually any mission profile and any US national interest must rely on a precise balance of
all capabilities. We did not do this in Somalia and we still do not do it well enough.

HUMINT was identified as a mission critical requirement in both assessments. My assessment team included a civilian representative from a national intelligence agency. This man was one of the best intelligence people I have ever met. He sat down with his colleagues in country to determine if available HUMINT was sufficient to meet our needs. The answer was a caveated “yes.” There was a capability although not robust. It was possible to use this capability and counter some of the challenges to access to portions of Mogadishu denied to collectors. We based our expectations of success on this.

This was my first detailed exposure to national-level HUMINT. I was very impressed with the ethics, competence and compassion displayed by case officers. TFR expected Somali sources to place their lives in jeopardy and, for the most part, we did not truly appreciate, or care, about the risks to them. The national-level HUMINT case officers were placed in a quandary. Their sources trusted them and there was a bond of mutual respect, but TFR mission requirements were recognized as paramount. Case officers were willing to risk the lives of their sources. But, the national-level HUMINT officer in the TFR J2 aggressively challenged TFR J2 on most employment concepts. This led to intense discussions but was an invaluable source of checks and balances. I learned to appreciate the value of non-US lives a little more and it was very instructive.

The CISE CI teams had numerous LLSO sources. None had been through the rigorous vetting process that leads to a high degree of confidence in reporting. Most were sources who talked in return for money or food. The focus was on
immediate tactical force protection and such information could be easily provided without threatening the source’s family or clan.

CI personnel, with a few exceptions, were relatively inexperienced. In my view, they were too caught up in how neat it was to ride around outside the cantonment areas. The same mind-set that said CI teams were there to collect not to analyze and then allowed its collection to be ignored was prevalent. The 10th Division had one brigade in country. The S2 of this brigade was also working his own LLSO for force protection. I am not sure if any of this effort was every synchronized.

There were some successes in finding arms caches and the like. This was a serious effort done at a very low level. The shortfalls notwithstanding, CI teams were doing something but their value to our mission was minimal.

So, on arrival, we had a capable although very small HUMINT capability from national-level efforts and numerous LLSO sources with little or no perceived value to our mission. You can not sprinkle holy water and create HUMINT capability nor can you spend a lot of money and start a production line for HUMINT. You either have it or you do not. We did not have as much as we wanted, but we thought we could be successful with what we had.

Murphy’s Law says that what you have the least of will break first. By late August we either had working, or en route, impressive multidiscipline capabilities. The notable exception was HUMINT. We had what we had and it was about to get worse. Our primary HUMINT capability was vested in one individual with people working for him. This asset was fully developed and enjoyed our full confidence. He was going to be the single point of success (or failure) and we
were going to use all the rest of our capabilities, technical and non-technical, in support of him.

Near the end of August, our HUMINT world came apart. Our principal agent was good but he was not beyond the kind of machismo common in Africans. As we were preparing to launch full operations, he got drunk and shot himself in the head while playing Russian roulette. We evacuated him to another country but he died en route.

We all hung our hopes on this one capability. In hindsight, when this capability disappeared, we should have seriously tried to cancel the mission. Realistically, since we were there, I doubt we would have been allowed to come home.

So, the next day we sat down and tried to wargame how to proceed. This was a meeting of a number of intelligence and operator personnel. The national-level HUMINT assessment was that the subordinates of the now dead source could provide some support but not nearly to the level originally described and that we knew we needed. This developed the key lieutenant and infrastructure approach outlined earlier in this paper. We also reluctantly decided to employ selected LLSO sources. This made everyone nervous for two reasons: the sources and their handlers.

**An Omen I Should Have Understood**

On 25 September, a UH60 from 10th Mountain Division was in its landing approach to Mogadishu Airport. It was fired upon and hit by a RPG. The aircraft crashed outside the airport. The fact that a helicopter was downed by a RPG was noted in the TFR J2.
I asked one of the TFR helicopter pilots about it. Specifically, I asked him what impact did this downing have on TFR. He told me that the pilots met and discussed what happened. In their opinion, the shoot down was lucky, i.e., "big sky, little bullet."

I asked him again what it meant to TFR. His reply was that the 10th Division aircraft was flying slow and level as it landed. TFR aircraft did not do that, they flew rapidly random and irregular flight profiles. He also said that 10th Division pilots were good, but they had less flight time and experience than TFR pilots did. The combination of experience and better tactics minimized the RPG threat to TFR aircraft. This appeared to be the consensus assessment of the 25 September shoot down. In hindsight, I wish we had given this event more scrutiny. However, I accepted the explanation because it sounded plausible, came from an impeccable source (and was what I wanted to hear?). We did not correlate the Blackhawk loss and the number of RPGs available in Mogadishu. We did not view this event from the Somali perspective: Successfully shooting down a helicopter with a RPG added a new potential TTP to the SNA.

**TFR Missions**

TFR missions encompassed a broad range of activities. Some are covered elsewhere in this document and not all will be covered because of classification and because of my poor memory. The most publicized was the 3-4 October raid. However, there were six other direct action missions launched from Mogadishu Airport. There were also ancillary operations that evolved from success of collocation of intelligence capabilities and great support by TFR forces. Mission summary:
30 AUG Lig Ligato Compound 0 Casualties
7 SEP Russian Compound 2 x WIA (minor)
14 SEP Jialiou House 0 Casualties
17 SEP Radio Aideed 0 Casualties
18 SEP Otto’s Garage 0 Casualties
21 SEP Otto Convoy Capture 0 Casualties
3-4 OCT Salad Meeting Site 12/16 KIA; 83/84 WIA;
MIA 5?/ 0?;

Initial/Final
6 OCT Mortar Attack on TFR 1 KIA; 16 WIA

Cueing and tip-off are simply using one capability or system to direct or redirect the efforts of another system. In conventional intelligence operations, setting conditions to make this happen is high adventure. Technology, physical separation, and bureaucratic organizational barriers are hard to defeat. COL McKnight’s vision set the conditions for success of TFR J2. The physical collocation avoided all barriers. It also produced a team-building dynamic. It did not take long for this to surface.

As we occupied our FSB, we began to receive attention from the SNA. Random mortar attacks happened every night. Oddly enough, the first attacks were more accurate than later ones. This may be due to the fact that the stacked MILVANS obstructed observation and calls for fire.
However, the Airport Manager’s building and the area immediately by it received several mortar hits. On 29 August mortar rounds landed further away from the Airport Manager’s building but damaged some aircraft and slightly wounded five personnel.
TFR J2 targeted the nightly mortar attacks. SIGINT assets heard the mortar nets. However, our ability to react did not result in success. The SNA did not use especially detailed or elaborate firing procedures for their mortars. As such, a tube was rapidly assembled, rounds fired, and moved before we could react. We know this because on one occasion TFR J3 put an airborne ambush out and succeeded in catching the SNA in the process. However, this only destroyed one tube and one team.

One evening, a HUMINT representative who was not normally at the TFR J2 was in "Room 1" when the mortar net became active. The HUMINT representative immediately identified the voices on the mortar net as the same voices on the radios used by D’AALO Airlines, one of the commercial airlines operating at Mogadishu Airport. This made sense. One, these Somalis had access to the airport for targeting. Two, they had a legitimate reason to have radios. HUMINT was used in concert with SIGINT, and we had a target.

The "Airport Gestapo"

The security posture of Mogadishu Airport concerned TFR. TFR J2 and subordinate unit CI personnel built a profile of the airport. A number of aspects were concerns.

First, the overall security of the airport was suspect. It was surrounded by a simple wire fence with numerous gaps through which the Somalis sold local wares. These gaps were certainly sufficient for infiltration. The guard force was Egyptian and too small for the task. Local security was accomplished by each element on the airport. There were numerous shortfalls in general security.
TFR CI coordinated with the Egyptians and was surprised. Although too small in number to do the security job to standard, the Egyptians were competent, confident, and dedicated. Egyptians manned the main gate of the airport, guarded the terminal, and assisted in “customs control” of incoming and outgoing flights by African Airlines and D’AALO Airlines.

There was a small Somali “police” contingent as well. These were the remnant of the immigration control apparatus. They were proud men and obviously only a shell of their former selves. They were a motley non-standard crew but were dedicated.

Commercial aircraft arrival was an interesting affair. The aircraft were Russian passenger jets with East European crews. Africans were jammed into the aircraft along with every kind of cargo, alive and inanimate, known to man. The smell was horrendous and the eclectic mixture of western dress, African tribal apparel, and everything in between, was always entertaining.

As the aircraft landed, the police and Egyptians went to the airplane and managed passengers from off the plane, across the tarmac, and into the partially completed terminal building to “clear customs.” TFR CI people participated in this action and sometimes checked documents, asked questions, etc. There was absolutely no legitimate legal justification for us to do this but we did, and no one ever questioned it. This was the genesis of the nickname, “Airport Gestapo.” In the meantime, a crew of about twenty Somalis with an assortment of vehicles would unload the cargo spaces. This was accomplished with a lot of loud activity, loud talking, and grab-ass. The process was repeated when aircraft loaded to depart.
TFR CI people monitored all incoming and outgoing flights. This was an attempt to identify known SNA, or other things that did not seem to fit. Initially, this operation was left entirely to our group of very competent and capable CI people and a Ranger squad. However, an interesting event led COL McKnight to send me out with them. On one occasion, a Somali arriving from Djibouti had a briefcase containing almost $4 million US dollars. Of equal note, people who did not fit the profile began to leave and arrive. I spent my time trying to stay out of the way of the CI folks and Rangers who were very good and needed neither my supervision nor my assistance, but I was there if they needed me.

The Somali police and Egyptian military police were working very hard to conduct effective random searches of cargo. We noticed that this task was difficult given their poor collection of knives and lack of gloves. TFR J4 provided twenty Leatherman tools and sets of gloves to us. We provided these to the customs personnel. It made their job easier and they were more thorough. More importantly, it established a positive working relationship with both groups. This was tested when we unilaterally exploited the information concerning the D'AALO Airlines connection to the mortar net.

Shortly after we connected D'AALO Airlines to the mortar net by HUMINT and SIGINT, MG Garrison and MG Montgomery gave us approval to roll up the net. We knew when the D'AALO Airlines flight was due to land although each flight was at least 30 minutes late. That afternoon, in addition to TFR CI and a Ranger Squad, we had the rest of a Ranger Platoon hidden and immediately available.
The Somali police and Egyptians did not know that this was not a normal profile. This was done to protect OPSEC. The airplane landed, passengers disembarked, and the D'AALO crew arrived to unload the aircraft. We waited until the aircraft was unloaded and then moved in. The entire crew was intimidated and captured by the Rangers, searched and flex-cuffed, and then sent to the UN detention center. The operation occurred without a hitch. Neither the Egyptians nor the Somali police said anything but it was obvious they were not happy.

That evening, we found the mortar net active. However, the frequencies were different and so were the voices. One station asked about a specific guy. He was told, "He got arrested by UNOSOM today." Mortar attacks, which were never accurate continued, but at least one group was neutralized.

30 AUG Lig Ligato Compound

The Lig Ligato Compound, an early mission, was a hold over target from the CISE. Allegedly, the compound was "Aideed associated." It appeared to be relatively easy and we could choose the conditions for attack, i.e., night. In many respects, it was a confidence target for the force. Our organic assets were still arriving and in stages of employment so we accepted, with little verification, the CISE target. This was a mistake because we placed too much credence in the CISE and UNOSOM U2 and failed to adequately confirm the target. We assumed the target was valid and then employed surveillance assets to maintain target continuity. Shortly before launch, I was in the JOC and received a secure telephone call from UNOSOM U2. He added a second building to the target set and said both were part
of the Lig Ligato complex. The second building was very close to the original building and surveillance captured both.

Assault forces easily captured both buildings and were surprised to find white people in one of them. It turned out that the building UNOSOM U2 added to the target set was occupied by a UN activity. It became apparent that the UNOSOM U2 did not know what UN, NGO, or PVO entities were where in Mogadishu. Additionally, it was obvious from the stockpile of vehicle parts, food, and other materials, as well as money, that this was some UN activity into the Somali black market.

**7 SEP Russian Compound**

This mission launched based on reporting from a LLSO source. The operation went off without a hitch. However, the assault force encountered more Somalis than we anticipated. Of note, some were Marihan Clan bandits, allied with Aideed. During the course of clearing the buildings, Marihan men grabbed women and children to use as human shields. So much for manly conduct? We later found out that we missed Aideed by less than 30 feet. We assaulted the compound based on our interpretation of the source's information. We hit a "dry hole." However, we learned later that we were off by one building and Aideed barely escaped. I do not know if was caused by the source or our interpretation. It does not matter. We missed Aideed.

**Vignette 8**

By 16 September, TFR J2 was starting to feel the pressure. Three weeks of intense collection had not
yielded Aideed. At the nightly command and staff meeting, one of the psychologists told everyone that the J2 folks were starting to get a little frayed and needed support. His comment was, "The intel folks are kind of down, we need to not just pile on, like usual." He then told the assembled masses to think of "ten things to do with the TFR J2" and give them to him before the 17 September command and staff. The results, predictably, did not do much for the J2, but sure boosted everyone else's morale. The psychologist formally briefed them:

**TEN THINGS TO DO WITH THE J2 GUYS**

1. Hang from rafters and shoot when all pigeons are dead.
2. Give to Aideed to be his intel section...he won't take them, he knows where UNOSOM is, doesn't want to lose it.
3. Place in city with infrared strobe in butt and see if sensors can find him.
4. Cover with shoe goo and suspend from ceiling to attract flies.
5. Send for jog around the port wearing an Italian flag and a "I hate Nigerians" hat.
6. Use for game of "pin the brain on the J2."
7. Assign as air tester for port-o-potties.
8. Substitute for rats and lawyers in scientific research.
9. Trade for unlimited fly-overs of Swedish hospital. (Swedish nurses did daily nude sun bathing)
10. Use as demonstrator for teaching prostate exams.

It was nice to be loved.
21 SEP Otto's Convoy

A HUMINT source provided original information that Osman Otto, Aideed's principal lieutenant, was going to move through a specific part of the city. This was a daylight mission. We knew what sort of vehicle pattern was associated with Otto. Surveillance assets were arrayed to cover the specific location. We detected the movement pattern, gained target track, and notified assault forces. Assault forces executed a very well done capture of the convoy. Otto ran into a group of buildings. A building search found him cowering in a kitchen.

Otto was transported to TFR headquarters by helicopter. I was one of the first staff people to deal with him. He was given a quick medical check and thoroughly searched. He had a letter in his pocket from foreign journalists in Mogadishu. It was signed by several from different countries, none were US. The letter to Aideed encouraged him to continue to attack and to kill UN and US forces because that would ensure his victory. So much for journalists reporting events and not trying to make them?

Otto was given to the UN. He was held on an island off the southern coast of Somalia. Efforts to use him against Aideed did not work very well. This was most likely a function of his loyalty to Aideed.

3-4 October Salad Meeting House

Sunday, 3 October, started as a "down" day...actually, a misnomer. The force was always ready to launch. However, on that Sunday, TFR J4 coordinated for a special dinner of grilled steaks, baked potatoes, and other food. We were eating well courtesy of the USSOCOM J4 D-Cell. That said,
our normal ration cycle was A-C-A with very good, but consistently bland, food. J4's coup with steak and potatoes was something everyone looked forward to that day. In the early afternoon, D-Cell began to work on cooking the evening meal.

The mission began at about 1330 hours. A HUMINT source reported that Salad, allegedly the Finance Minister, was to attend a meeting at a specific house in the Habr Gedir section of town. The specific house was unknown but it was assessed to be close to the Olympic Hotel. A direct action mission near the Olympic Hotel and surrounding area was the Mogadishu equivalent of bombing downtown Hanoi in daylight during the Viet Nam War.

From 1330 hours until approximately 1530 hours, "Room 1" was barely constrained bedlam. Collection and surveillance assets were redirected and orchestrated. The HUMINT source was asked via his handler to use non-technical communication means to refine the target house.

We vectored assets to cover this target marking. A few minutes later we found out that the HUMINT source was back, claimed to have executed the signal, and was scared to death. None of our assets saw his signal.

We asked the handler to send the source back to mark the target again. An obviously nearly hysterical Somali source wanted no part of our request. The handler convinced the source to mark the target again. This time, assets were on station and the signal was observed but the location was nothing like the description the source initially provided. "Room 1" began to become skeptical of the credibility of the source and the information. The handler relayed to us that the source could not safely mark
the target house because of local security. The actual target was at the opposite end of the block.

We redirected assets to watch the house at the end of the block. Almost immediately, we observed a red vehicle reportedly associated with Salad. Sustained surveillance began and we alerted "Room 2" which began to build target briefing materials. Target surveillance tried to refine local security, immediate area security, vehicles in the area, physical aspects of the target, and reaction forces. For example, helicopters needed to know about wires, poles, fastrope sites, and other obstructions and safety of flight items. Ground operators needed to know how many floors, location of stairs and doors, exits/entrances, and local security.

At approximately 1600 hours, the operators had been briefed. Leadership had been briefed. This was not an easy target. It was very close to the Olympic Hotel, i.e., downtown Aideed-ville. The risks were significant. I was not part of the risk/gain and launch discussion. However, I believe the previous success of operations close to the area, e.g., Radio Aideed; the confidence of the operators, and the elements of surprise and speed made this a "go." In this case, the leadership made a difficult decision that the high risk was justified by the overall mission. This was one of the best target development evolutions that TFR J2 executed during TFR. Given the intelligence, the mission of TFR, and the capability of the units, I believe, then and now, that MG Garrison made the right decision.

The concept was a ground/air assault. The assault was letter perfect except for the fastrope injury of a Ranger on the target. The target was quickly secured. In addition to Salad, there were 23 other Somalis attending
his meeting. Subsequently, Salad and two others were determined to be key people, the rest were minor players.

A ground element of armored HMMWVs and M923 5 tons arrived from the airport. The 24 Somalis, alive and well, were put into M923s and the convoy headed back to the airport. The Salad house was evacuated. The mission was, in essence, over.

As a MH60 Blackhawk piloted by CW4 Cliff Woolcott and CW3 Bull Briley left the area, it was struck in the tail boom by a RPG. The pilots lost full control of the helicopter but none of their cool. In “Room 2” I watched the helicopter crash. The pilots crashed the helicopter in such a manner that it maximized passenger survivability at the expense of their own survival. CW4 Woolcott and I were part of a JSOTF during DESERT STORM and briefed the President’s Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (PFIAB) after the operation. He was one of the bravest and most skilled people I ever met and one of my personal heroes in the Special Operations community.

The downing of the first Blackhawk changed everything. The ground force was bringing the Somalis from the target back to the airport. Forces that were exfilling the target moved to secure the crash site. Other than the fast rope injury, the mission incurred no casualties prior to the first helicopter crash.

The action to secure the crash site changed that. Somalis began to engage the force. Helicopters landed near the first crash site, a feat requiring immense skill given the clutter and close quarters. Wounded were loaded while pilots used their individual weapons to engage Somalis. The speed at which the Somalis appeared to mass surprised me. I think this may be the genesis of the “ambush” theory.
TFR was not ambushed. The mission went into Aideed’s strength. When the first Blackhawk was downed, the Somalis were able to react to that event in strength but not because of any deliberate action.

The advantages of speed, surprise and violence of action are fundamentals of surgical special operations. Mogadishu was no exception. The downing of the Blackhawk eliminated those for TFR. It was now a force on force firefight and TFR realized that change and reacted to it immediately.

At no time did the soldiers at the crash site ever lose the initiative. There were shortages of water, ammunition, and medical supplies, but resupply occurred. The soldiers on the first crash site were never in danger of being over run. Throughout the night hundreds of RPGs and thousands of small arms rounds were fired at the ground force and the helicopters supporting them. Helicopter aerial suppressive fire with miniguns and rockets protected the ground force and no more helicopters were lost to enemy gunfire, although several were damaged. The close quarters of the crash site required tremendous precision since very fire mission was “danger close.” The skill and composure of the pilots and the ground force was exceptional.

The TFR package did not include AC-130 gunships. This has been identified by some as a flaw. I heard discussions about how the mission might have ended differently if AC-130s were present. I discount most of this as Air Force palaver. AC-130s were not included primarily because of mission requirements elsewhere, i.e., Brindisi and Saudi Arabia/Kuwait. We do not have enough AC-130 aircraft for every mission requirement, then or now. In any event, AC-130s would not have made an appreciable
difference in the outcome. First, the mission started and ended in daylight and AC-130s do not like to operate in the daylight. Second, the aircraft would have staged out of country and station time and ammunition would not have allowed the aircraft to remain on station for sixteen-plus hours. Third, rules of engagement guidance on collateral damage would not have allowed the AC-130s to use maximum force for fear of "civilian casualties and damage." Fourth, AC-130s could not have prevented either helicopter downing. Fifth, sufficient aerial fire support was available from TFR helicopters.

The manner in which CW4 Woolcott and CW3 Briley crashed landed their helicopter maximized the safety of their passengers but at the expense of their own lives. The helicopter impacted a wall in a narrow alley. Both pilots were killed instantly when the front end of the helicopter telescoped in the collision. With difficulty, CW3 Briley's body was retrieved, but CW4 Woolcott's body could not be removed.

'Energetically will I meet the enemies of my country. I shall defeat them on the field of battle for I am better trained and will fight with all my might. Surrender is not a Ranger word. I will never allow a fallen comrade to fall into the hands of the enemy and under no circumstances will I ever embarrass my country.'

Efforts to secure the crash site and to continue to try and extract CW4 Woolcott's body occupied the rest of the night. Read the excerpt above and understand why CW4 Woolcott could not be left. Shortly before the assault
force departed the crash site for the Soccer Stadium, efforts to free CW4 Woolcott’s body were successful.

Shortly (a matter of minutes) after the first Blackhawk was shot down, a second Blackhawk was downed by RPG fire. The crash site was beyond the reach of ground forces. The crash site was covered by helicopters. Two Special Forces soldiers, MSG Gary Gordon and SFC Randy Shughart, fastroped from a helicopter to the second crash site. The courage they demonstrated is evidenced by the posthumous Congressional Medals of Honor they received. Again, I refer the reader to the excerpt of the Ranger Creed.

(Sir, while I wholly agree with everything in this paragraph, it does not add to the intel lessons.)

The ground force fought its way back to the airport from the target. I met the convoy. It was a sobering sight. There were young Rangers who were obviously dead as well as some who were wounded. The vehicles left the target with 24 live and uninjured Somalis. There were only 22 alive when the convoy returned. Two Somali prisoners were dead; a third died shortly after we unloaded the vehicles. All were victims of Somali fire.

The Somalis were a sorry sight. Most bowels and bladders had let go. They were rank, scared, and filthy. Standard procedure was to provide a cursory medical check of all prisoners. On 3 October, this was not possible because all of our medics were tending US wounded. I made sure the prisoners were searched and basically alive, then returned to “Room 1.”

Intelligence assets were starting to run out of station time. Dark was quickly coming. I was in “Room 1.”
A tremendous amount of effort went into working down the list of all of our options off the collection plan matrix. Some coverage was easy to modify because it was almost immediately at hand. Others, however, required greater levels of coordination and risk. Some of our most valuable systems worked miracles that night.

One US Navy platform and crew went above and beyond the call of duty. The platform had been on station all day over Mogadishu. It landed earlier in the day, refueled, and then took off for what was supposed to be only a couple more hours of station time before returning to its out of country staging base. We asked the platform to remain on station and it did. It finally left after the assault force recovered safely to the Pakistani compound at the Soccer Stadium. It had been on station for almost 26 hours and willingly violated crew day and crew rest regulations in order to support TFR’s ground and rotary wing forces. The aircraft had no defensive capability. The selfless actions of the crew included risks that they automatically and immediately accepted.

The intelligence system piece done, we started losing intelligence people to other critical requirements. The Ranger Regiment representatives fell in with 3d Ranger Battalion personnel as relief forces began to form. Other subordinate unit intelligence personnel were working hard to try and keep up with the current situation. My own J2 personnel were working hard to help in this effort. The normal role of “Room 1” took a back seat to “Room 2” and efforts to keep track of the firefight.

The rest of the night passed in a blur for me. I should have been with LTC Lee Van Arsdale from the J3 as he went out to orchestrate the coalition (Pakistani) relief
force. At that time, JSOC was a tight team. Usually, a J3 guy did not go without a J2 guy. I referred to myself as, "Van Arsdale's faithful but stupid manservant." But, when he left, I was still working collection asset items and then was trying to help outside. As a result, I missed his departure and spent the rest of the night wondering who was watching his back.

I spent time in the area outside the TFR Headquarters and hanger. It was a large rectangular paved/semi-paved area. It was a horrific scene. Armored HMMWVs came back shot to pieces, all kinds of fluid leaking out on the ground: oil, fuel, hydraulic fluid, blood. I became a true believer in the HMMWV that night. We plugged holes, refilled fluids, and the vehicles were ready to go out again.

I do not remember some of what I did that night. I was just another pair of hands to help move dead and wounded, help repair vehicles, and do whatever seemed to need doing.

TFR benefited from some outstanding support that night especially by two elements at Mogadishu Airport. The first was an Air Force medical unit close to our compound. The second was an Army Engineer Firefighter Team. Medical people were immediately on hand to perform triage and treat wounded. Our casualties in terms of KIA might have been higher without the immediate medical support from the Air Force. Our own organic medical personnel were fully engaged either at the first crash site or at the Headquarters. The firefighters were a versatile and outstanding group. In addition to Emergency Medical Technician qualifications, they used their firetruck auxiliary equipment such as lights and generators to
support us. The trucks used water and hoses to wash down the preparation area and wash away the potentially volatile mixture of fluids and fuel.

I returned to "Room 1" and "Room 2" periodically during the night. The NCOs were taking care of business and I would end up back in the hanger area. Sometime around first light, I found a corner and sat down.

I was back in "Room 1" and "Room 2" when the assault forces made it to the Soccer Stadium. We were working hard between the J3, J2, and subordinate units to account for all personnel. There was a great deal of confusion, movement, and reacting during the night. Our first order of business was to determine personnel accountability.

The situation we faced on the morning of 4 October was stark. In addition to 12 dead, we had 82 wounded, and even more disturbing, 6 missing. The missing were the crew of the second helicopter and MSG Gordon and SFC Shughart.

(Durant/Frank/Field/Cleveland/Shughart/Gordon)—Author Note

The Aftermath

Three events stand out for me. First, the effort to account for our MIAs, second, the 6 October mortar attack on the TFR compound, and third, on the morning of 4 October, our launch authority was withdrawn to USCINCENT in Tampa. This effectively shut us down because there was no way to launch a compressed timeline mission with launch approval in Tampa.

Everything we built for TFR intelligence focused on Aideed and his infrastructure. Faced with six? MIAs, we had to change fast. A new collection plan was built and we started working hard with HUMINT, SIGINT, and surveillance systems to find the MIAs. On the morning of 4 October, we
could not confirm anything about the six MIA's. We did not know if they were alive, dead, captured, wounded. This caused a great deal of anguish for the operators and anguish coupled with frustration for TFR J2.

 Starting on 4 October, we began to account for MIAs in a very grim manner. I do not remember the exact timeline but it occupied the next couple of days. HUMINT sources started to report that dead US soldiers were being dragged through the streets, a fact that was confirmed in stark detail by CNN video. The aviation unit immediately identified the first body seen on the video.

 HUMINT sources reported a body left at a tire roadblock in the city, and then managed to recover the body. It was one of us. The Red Cross brought in the remains of one of our casualties to the Swedish hospital at the airport. The Red Cross delivered several pieces of what appeared to be a black corpse, a total of less than 60 pounds. All of our casualties were white. However, the remains were evacuated to Dover AFB and DNA testing confirmed it was one of our SF soldiers. Evidently, the body had been temporarily covered in lime and buried which accounted for the discoloration. The other two MIAs, less CW3 Durant, were accounted for and changed to KIA.

 We found out that CW3 Durant was a prisoner. This too changed the complexion of our efforts. We worked hard to try and find him, a needle in a large haystack. However, with no launch authority, a recovery mission would have been problematic. Fortunately, he was released. TFR formed two lines one either side of the C141, toasted him with a very small shot of whiskey, and cheered as he was medevaced, the only positive aspect of the aftermath.
Further irony exists. HUMINT sources indicate that on the morning of 4 October, the SNA was on the edge of defeat. It knew it had been beaten and it had taken over a thousand killed and wounded. Our sources told us that one more attack might run Aideed out of Mogadishu into his homeland, or even out of the country.

The final chapter in Mogadishu was the night of 6 October. GEN Downing was there with us. It was a fairly warm evening. The mood was subdued. I took a shower just before dark and walked from the shower trailer, down to the hanger, and spoke to COL McKnight and GEN Downing who were standing in front of a HMMWV talking. Several groups of people were around the outside of the hanger, too. I left, walked around behind the HMMWV, and up the outside stairs of the airport manager’s building to the second floor. As I walked up the step, a large mortar round impacted at the rear of the HMMWV and right where I had been 30 seconds before. This was a golden BB. While it nearly hit GEN Downing and COL McKnight, the mortar round did kill one and wound 16. The wounded included several key leaders. Without launch authority, we could not even try and find the mortar crew, the final frustration.

Oddly enough, we brought in more forces, but still had to deal with launch authority in Tampa. I guess the national level policy makers were wrestling with what to do next. We sat in Mogadishu. TFR J2 placed priority on force protection of the TFR FSB, and on finding Aideed and his infrastructure. Finally, we received orders to redeploy and left on 22 October. COL McKnight and I were on the next to the last aircraft out of Mogadishu.

**EPILOG**
As I said earlier, if I had realized the far reaching implications of TFR, I would have paid more attention. In the end, TFR was a great collection of soldiers and units, given a tough job by a civilian leadership with no clue about what it wanted. The mission was conducted with courage, dedication, and innovation.

Several months after our return from Somalia, I was in England coordinating with United Kingdom Special Forces units. I was in Cadogan Hotel in downtown London and had the television turned on to international CNN. I watched Aideed, at the UNOSOM Headquarters, enter the same light armored blue Chevrolet Suburban that I rode around Mogadishu in during the July assessment trip. It was the same vehicle we used to coordinate with elements at Mogadishu Airport during TFR. The vehicle, with a US escort, drove Aideed from the UNOSOM Headquarters to the airport where a US C12 flew him to Kenya for peace talks. I put my head in my hands and, for the only time before, during, or after TFR, I felt like crying.