

Decisions of a Small Unit Leader in a Peace Keeping Operation
Operation Restore Hope (Jan 93-Mar 93)
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Background:

In April of 1992, the United Nations began an operation in the country of Somalia, entitled "UNOSOM," to provide humanitarian aid and facilitate the end of hostilities in a country that had deteriorated to a state of anarchy, with warring clans battling over sections of the country. UNOSOM was largely unsuccessful and in July 1992, the U.N. Secretary General asked for increased aid in airlifts and security for food and medical supplies. The United States responded with forces to aid in what was to be called "Operation Provide Relief". This was the first of three phases of U.S. involvement in support of the United Nations' humanitarian mission to Somalia and was meant to provide immediate relief to the starving population of the country of Somalia in the form of foodstuffs and medicine. In December of 1992, the second phase of operations was entitled "Restore Hope," and was designed to combine humanitarian assistance with limited military action to further reduce the suffering of the Somali people and begin the disarming of rival factions within the country, thereby enabling a follow on mission, USFORSOM (UNOSOM II), to begin the process of nation building.

Prior to November of 1992, most Americans had never heard of Somalia. It seemed that all of a sudden, it was big news. There was a horrendous drought that had resulted in starvation on a scale that many of us recall from the early 1980s in Ethiopia. Ethiopia

and Somalia share a common border, but I didn't know that at the time. Like most Americans, I also didn't care all that much unless it affected me. In this case it did.

I was a twenty-five year old Staff Sergeant in the Military Police. I was the squad leader of Third Squad, Fourth Platoon, of the 511th Military Police Company, stationed at Fort Drum, New York. Fort Drum is the home of the 10th Mountain Division, and the division had been placed on alert to join the Marine Expeditionary Brigade already on the ground in Somalia. It was just a matter of when.

The deployment went fairly smoothly in retrospect. Although our company had not practiced emergency deployment procedures in the past, when we received word to load our vehicles and equipment, we did a good job. We loaded our equipment and trucks onto trains and, since it took weeks for our equipment to get to Somalia, waited to fly.

We finally arrived in Mogadishu, Somalia, in early January of 1993. It was approximately 0300 hrs when we set down. I don't remember the exact temperature, but it was hot. We weren't acclimatized by any means, and at least one soldier in our platoon became a heat casualty while assisting in the download of equipment from the aircraft. The temperature change was in the neighborhood of 60-90 degrees Fahrenheit.

Over the next two months we conducted tactical operations in support of Operation Restore Hope. We conducted the full range of Military Police tasks during tactical operations, which included area security, base cluster security, convoy security, traffic control, processing displaced persons, limited raids, searches, and ambushes. We also provided personal security for the Commanding General (CG) of the division. This detail required a small personal security detachment (PSD) of six men and a bodyguard (BG). The bodyguard was usually the team leader and ranking man on the team. It was the

responsibility of the PSD to work with the general's aide de camp to know when and where the general would be traveling. The PSD would then conduct route reconnaissance of several routes to and from the desired location to ensure the safety of the CG during movement.

The majority of our company, the 511th MPs, had received word that it would be returning to the United States and Fort Drum, along with the Provisional 10th MP BN in a few weeks, however, the PSD detail would still be required, and would remain in country. The CG was from the 10th MTN Division, and we would provide his security. The company commander, CPT Kim Fields, asked for volunteers to assume duties on the PSD, and, being the only unmarried Staff Sergeant in the company, I had no problems staying a few extra weeks. I asked a couple of men from my squad if they would stay with me because I trusted them and we had worked well together. Specialist Angelo Jordan was the guy that I really wanted to stay, but he was a bit jaded from his experiences in this country and the Gulf War and wanted to get out of there. Specialist James Walsh, with whom I was friendly decided to stay. He was an okay guy who, at times, could be very thoughtful and at other times left you wondering where the heck he was coming from. He would be my driver. We had a new private from our platoon who also volunteered to stay. His name was John Downs. He was a local kid who had grown up in Carthage, NY, all of five miles from Fort Drum, and had requested Fort Drum as his first duty assignment. For this reason we always gave him a ration of crap. He was a good guy though, and a good young soldier. He paid attention and tried his best. I don't think I ever heard him complain like most young soldiers do. He was the gunner in my

truck. The new PSD was made up of four other men from other platoons. They all came well recommended.

Since none of us had any experience with PSD, we spent a week with the outgoing team getting a “shotgun blast” of the basic fundamentals. We learned formations around the principal (the guy we were protecting), actions to take on contact or when faced with a threat, precautionary measures to take, and even how to stand so as not to attract attention. It was during this changeover that the following incident occurred.

Both PSDs (incoming and outgoing) had been working together for about five days. At this point, my guys had pretty much assumed responsibility for the mission and were doing the driving, conducting outer perimeter security at the halt, etc. We still kept the outgoing PSD NCOIC and one of his men to provide feedback and continued guidance regarding our techniques and procedures. Both of these men were Sergeants (E-5), and both had been formally trained in protective services. SGT Swearingen was the outgoing team NCOIC, and I can't remember the other SGTs name although he was a good man who knew his business.

In the late morning we had received word that MG Arnold, CG of the 10th MTN Division would be traveling to the airport later that day. This was a place both teams had been to at least twice while training together and numerous times throughout the entire deployment; regardless, we immediately set out to conduct route reconnaissance. Since we had been there before with the CG, we felt the need to explore different routes to prevent establishing a pattern of travel. Although it would seem that we were being proactive in not becoming complacent regarding security, we had, in actuality, already become lax. Since we had all been to the airport a hundred times, and being that it was

only approximately two kilometers from the embassy compound where the CG lived, we felt too comfortable with this mission. I did not go over to the division G2 or BN S2 to check for any updated intelligence prior to our recon. Had I done so, I would have found out that there was a crowd forming in the vicinity of the K4 traffic circle, a well-known landmark in the city and a point of convergence of five Main Supply Routes (MSRs). This would proved to be a serious oversight.

Around 1300-1400, we left the embassy compound on a recon of the route and headed north on Afgoy Rd., west on October 21st Rd., and south on Jalle Siad Rd. taking us the entrance to the airport. Our convoy for this recon consisted of two HMMWVs, made up of my six-man detail, plus SGT Swearingen and the other SGT from the original PSD, riding along as oversight. On two previous trips, this had been the route that we had taken. It was the one we “normally” took, and it was relatively out of the main stream of city traffic, not passing through any significantly busy areas. However, as previously stated, we did not want to establish a routine, so we continued on to recon our first alternate route.

We proceeded N-E on Airport Rd. from the main gate of the Mogadishu International Airport, which was currently being occupied and controlled by U.S. and UN forces. This route took us up to the most prominent intersection in Mogadishu, the K-4 traffic circle. There are five major roads which led into this rotary: Afgoye Rd. which heads out to the N-W and back to the entrance to the US Embassy compound; Via Lenin which runs to the NNE out to October 21 Rd and back to Afgoye Rd, taking us back to the entrance of the compound; Via Maka Al Murabama, which runs east out to the port; and Via Wazaba

which runs S-E out passed the airport and further on to the port. We planned to check out Afgoye Rd and Via Lenin as alternate routes.

As our convoy neared the traffic circle, we observed a large crowd in the immediate vicinity. This observation was not, in itself, significant because this intersection is a major traffic zone for the city, much of that traffic being pedestrian, so large crowds in this area were fairly common. As we came to within twenty meters of the entrance to the circle, it became clear that the crowd was not "normal." They began pelting our convoy with rocks, hunks of concrete, and other debris. We immediately closed our windows just as they shattered in spider web fashion from stones and rocks. I was amazed at this sudden change in the situation. As per Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), our vehicle gunner, Pv2 Downs was oriented to the rear of the convoy as rear security, as ours was the second and last truck in line. He did not see the sudden change in the situation, and my momentary amazement resulted in my failing to inform him to get down inside of the relative protection of the hard-topped HMWWV. He was struck in the back by several stones but, luckily and thankfully, wasn't injured due to the protection of his Kevlar helmet and flak vest. He called out, "Sergeant! They're throwing rocks at us!" I replied with something like, "No shit! Now get down!" but I felt bad that I had failed to tell him immediately to get down, as he obviously couldn't have possibly seen what was happening.

The lead vehicle had continued into the traffic circle, and we were right behind them as I instructed them to attempt to head out to the N-E on Via Lenin. We had to drive directly over a pile of debris that had been thrown into the roadway as a roadblock. We crossed the debris without incident and entered Via Lenin. About thirty meters up the

road, however, two large shipping containers (MILVANS) had been dragged across the road and blocked our escape by that route. Again, I was amazed at conduct of the people, the attempts at blocking the circle, and how the heck they had managed to get these MILVANS into the middle of the street. In retrospect, I realize now that I had become complacent in my thinking. I could not grasp that these people would resent our presence here; that they would basically attack us; or, much more arrogantly and, in my opinion typical of American thinking, that they could possibly think to fight US forces. All of this aside, I instructed the convoy to turn around as best as possible, without dismounting the vehicles, and head back into the traffic circle and out Airport Rd. It was sometime during this sequence of events that I made my first report up to our company headquarters, informing it of our situation.

Both vehicles executed three-point turns before the crowd could converge on us and headed back into the traffic circle. At this point, my truck was in the lead. I instructed SPC Walsh to again drive over the pile of debris we had passed over before without incident. This time across, we weren't so lucky. As we crossed over the rubble, a large metal pole suddenly thrust up through the floor of vehicle on the front passenger side where I was sitting. The pole came right up between my feet and knees and was angled slightly back towards my groin. As the vehicle continued forward, the bottom of the pole caught something in the debris pile, resulting in the end section inside the vehicle, suddenly shooting forward against the front of the floor plate. I occasionally ponder how that pole could have seriously screwed me up, and yet never touched me.

The underside of the pole was wrapped up in a discarded strand of concertina wire. I saw this strand dragged from the front left of the vehicle, as we continued on across the

debris and through the violent crowd, and up underneath the right rear of the truck, consequently becoming wrapped around the right rear tire. Our forward momentum began to slow.

The rear vehicle now confirmed to us via FM radio communication that the concertina strand had become entangled in my truck's right rear tire. SPC Walsh informed me that he had the gas pedal floored, and the vehicle still was losing speed. The crowd had observed what had occurred and was watching our speed diminish. We were out of the traffic circle at this time on Airport Rd. and were able to move about seventy five meters down the road before we were completely stopped by the wire. When the HMWWV stopped, the crowd gave a cheer. For me, personally, that cheer was a pretty scary thing. It was sort of a wake up call to realize that we were in a mob, that we weren't bulletproof superheroes, and that we might not get out of this unscathed. Everything that had happened up to that point had, of course, caused me concern, but it hadn't occurred to me until that moment that we were possibly in some serious trouble.

With the halt of our vehicle, the second truck pulled up behind us. All members of the PSD dismounted, and we established a perimeter around the trucks. We were simply in a circle around the two vehicles with our weapons out facing outward. Meanwhile, I tried to assess the condition of the vehicle and inform the company of what was happening. At this point, I was instructed to go to the battalion frequency and speak directly with the battalion commander, LTC Pinkham, who, I have to confess, I didn't particularly think that much of at the time. My opinion of him would change very soon, though. I gave my situation report (SITREP) and was instructed to maintain security around the vehicles until the reaction force could arrive, in approximately 30 minutes. As all of this was

going on, the crowd had shifted from around the traffic circle and had moved down and around our location. It appeared to me that the crowd was trying to get around the front of us and possibly cut us off from the airport. They kept a healthy distance and had not as yet come too close, nor had they gotten up the courage to begin throwing stones again.

We had, however, pretty much reached the limit of our rules of engagement and didn't have many avenues left to us in dealing with a crowd. We all understood that we were limited in our response to hostilities; we were restricted from firing unless fired upon, and we were prohibited from firing "warning shots." In this particular situation, it was considered inappropriate to respond to being stoned by a mob with firing warning shots or firing at persons throwing stones. This left us pretty much at the whim of the mob, who, although they did not know our ROE, would begin to measure our response to their actions and take advantage of what they learned.

Approximately 45 minutes had passed since we first left the front gate of the embassy, and the crowd began to tighten around us. I had SPC Walsh break the "wire cutters" out of the truck's tool bag, and we tried to cut the concertina wire. It was a joke. The jaws of the wire cutters literally broke in the same fashion as a person's teeth might break if he had tried to bite through hard metal. I then instructed him to get back in the driver's seat and put the truck through its lower gears to see if it would have enough power to move. It did not.

Let me at this time interrupt the narrative to make a point. We, as soldiers and leaders, are indoctrinated from the earliest time of our service to fear the repercussions of damaging government property. We are told that we will suffer punishment under the Uniformed Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) or, at the very least, have to pay for

anything damaged out of pocket. The latter sometimes was more of a threat than the former when a soldier only “clears” a few hundred dollars per month. Because of this fact, I was motivated not to cause any further damage to the vehicle. I was concerned that if we got the truck rolling, it might ruin the transmission. Because of this, I did not instruct SPC Walsh to put the vehicle into four-wheel drive LOW that would have resulted in our being able to drive to the airport, although with some damage to the truck; however, this would eventually prove to be a moot concern.

I was at the point where I had to make a decision. This was the situation at that point: My detail was close to being encircled, I had one immobile vehicle and one that was fully functioning, no one was injured or wounded yet, a hostile crowd was very clearly getting ready to take action once it built up the courage, the thirty minutes that it would take the reaction force to get there was entirely too long a time to wait, the ROE prevented me from taking steps that my relatively small force would need to take to contain a crowd of several hundred, I did not want to damage my immobile truck, I did not want to lose my immobile truck, I did not want any of my soldiers to get injured or wounded, and I did not want to retreat. What I wanted to do was fire several bursts of warning fire into the air over the heads of the crowd. I wanted to disperse them. I wanted to push my perimeter out another 25 meters, but I did not have the means to do so. I wanted to keep my men safe and maintain control of my equipment.

This offered me two conflicting courses of action (COA) to consider. I could load all my men and equipment into the second truck and leave the immobile truck to the crowd, a very distasteful COA because it smelled like surrender, retreat, and consequently cowardice. I was the only tabbed Ranger in the Military Police Battalion. I had been an

Infantryman for the first three years of my Army career and wore the Expert Infantryman Badge. I was extremely proud. I was bullet proof and hard as woodpecker lips.

Surrender is not a Ranger word. I wasn't going to do it.

My second course of action entailed violating orders by firing shots over the heads of an "unarmed" crowd and dispersing this crowd by means of physical force. This COA would most likely escalate the situation and cause the appearance of firearms in the crowd. It would result in blood shed and an incident that would ripple through levels of politics and policy at levels that I had no idea about, both national and international. I did not consider all of that at the time and merely did not want to give ground or equipment in a cowardly fashion. We were going to stay where we were and hold our position. SGT Swearingen was trying to advise me to take the first COA and sit it out at the airport, waiting for the reaction force. I told him that I wasn't going to have any of that when a UN peacekeeper from Nigeria suddenly appeared on my perimeter.

I can't, for the life of me, recall his name, but I remember he identified himself as a Sergeant. He spoke English well and informed me that the reason that the crowd was so hostile was that we were westerners. He said that if we stayed there would be violence, and he advised me to leave. I told him that our truck wouldn't move, and I wasn't going to leave it. He said that he and his men (three or four men, in a small, white painted, UN armored car) would look after it and make sure that nothing happened to it. I still didn't want to go, but I looked around me and saw a great deal of concern on the faces of my men. There is no doubt that they would have done whatever I told them to do, whether it be stay or go, but they obviously thought the right thing to do was to leave the damn truck and get out of there.

I notified higher that the UN peacekeeper had agreed to secure the immobile truck and while waiting for a response, instructed the men to cross load all the equipment into the good truck. Now came another sticking point. Our radios, old style AN/PRC 46s, and cipher equipment, VINCENT, were secured in the vehicles with series 200 locks. For whatever reason, we did not maintain the keys to those locks along with our logbooks and vehicle lock keys. We would have to zero out the VINCENT, change the radio frequencies, and leave the commo gear with the vehicle. I was angry with that. It was about then that the crowd began to press in again. A few large stones flew overhead and struck one of the trucks, and I also heard a few shots fired in the distance, although we were not receiving fire. In the words of one of my Drill Sergeants, "... things were going from badder to worser." I decided that it was time to go and to leave the vehicle in the care of the Nigerian Sergeant in the UN vehicle.

We piled eight men with all kinds of weaponry and gear into one hard topped M1025 HMMWV and drove back down Airport Rd. towards the main entrance to the airport. I'd like to have said that I felt relieved to be getting out of the volatile situation that we had found ourselves in, but in reality, I felt like a coward and a failure. I felt as if I had run from the enemy and that I had failed my commander by losing control of one of my trucks, its radios, and COMSEC equipment. I radioed higher to send up a SITREP, but before I could relay the current events, was informed to go ahead and leave the vehicle with the UN Sergeant and move to the airport to await the reaction forces' arrival. SGT Swearingen and the other NCO tried to console me saying that we did the right thing, but I simply didn't agree at the time.

We got down to the airport in just a few minutes, and we waited. Approximately 60 minutes had passed since we first left on our recon. Every minute that passed aggravated me, because I really wanted to get back and recover my truck. I wanted to roll up with a platoon of MPs and take my truck back. It took the reaction force nearly an hour to arrive. The thirty-minute reaction time given to me was actually the time that they were required to hit the gate from the moment they were notified. We rolled out of the gate of the airport and headed up to the spot where I had left the vehicle.

When we got there it was gone and so was the UN vehicle. The crowd had dispersed and the traffic circle was relatively empty, although the locals in the area were glaring at us. I was very angry, and I am sure that caused me to be less than professional to the platoon leader of the reaction force. What I wanted was to drive through the surrounding neighborhoods in search of the truck. The PL called higher to send a SITREP and get guidance. We eventually did drive around the surrounding blocks and found one of the tires of the HMMWV about 200 meters from where the truck had been left. It seems that the concertina wire had peeled the tire off of the run flat rim and whoever had taken the truck simply kept driving it on the run flat, oblivious to any damage to the transmission or any other part of it. So my concerns of causing further damage to the vehicle proved moot in view of the loss of the entire vehicle.

We looked for around 10-15 minutes until crowds began to pelt this convoy of 12 HMMWVs with stones. The PL was quickly informed to return to the embassy compound and not risk injury or loss of another truck. So there it was: I lost my vehicle, I fled, and I was responsible for what could be viewed as a defeat. I had failed. I felt like shit.

Upon return to the embassy compound, I was ushered to the battalion TOC to report to the Battalion Commander, LTC Pinkham. My entire chain of command was there as well: LT Lombardo, PL of Fourth Platoon and a really great leader; SSG John Lacewell, PSG, a great mentor and one of my best friends at the time; CPT Kim Fields, Company Commander of the 511th MP Company and one of the best two COs that I have had the pleasure to serve under; and the Battalion XO, MAJ Dale Archer, who I didn't like and was pretty sure didn't like me. LTC Pinkham simply took me off to the side and asked, "What happened?" I relayed the course of events to him as I have related them in this monograph, although probably a bit more concisely given the passage of time, and he did something that I will never forget and gave me cause to change my assessment of him as a soldier and a leader. He told me that some people in the Division thought, as I myself did, that I shouldn't have left that truck there. He called them, "...a bunch of arm chair quarterbacks" and said, "I'm going to tell them all to fuck off." He told me that he thought I had done the right thing by my men, by not getting them injured or wounded. He said that he would support the decisions that I had made to the Division Commander if necessary and not to worry about it. To this day, I have found not a great many leaders who will put their own names on the line in support of the decisions of their subordinates.

Eventually, aircraft spotted the vehicle that night, on fire, in a neighborhood that I believe may have been to the north of the traffic circle. The recovery operation was launched the next day and was a real dog and pony show, including everyone from the BC on down to me. I was relegated a position as an M60 gunner, but for that matter, the company 1SG was standing watch on the perimeter on my right flank. Everyone wanted a piece of the action. The vehicle was totally burned out and was loaded in two pieces

(frame and body) onto a flat bed to be hauled to the maintenance yard. The radios were gone.

Afterward

I want to make it clear to the reader that I do not wish to present myself as some sort of “Hero.” I am not. The fact that this event took place in Somalia, in no way, and in my opinion, puts it on a level with what was experienced by the men of Task Force Ranger, on October 3-4 of 1993, in support of USFORSOM (UNOSOM II). The two situations are not comparable. What I wished to do here was provide some insight into what a junior leader (e.g. Squad or Platoon) may find him or herself confronted with today. At the time of this writing, almost exactly ten years have passed. Our country had executed a peacekeeping operation in Haiti, and currently has peacekeeping operations in progress in Bosnia, Kosovo, the Sinai, and Afghanistan. I feel it is safe to say that this trend will not change. We may have sputters of intense combat, but long missions of nation building and peacekeeping will surely follow. You may very well find yourself conducting missions that seem increasingly monotonous and suddenly flare into violence. By virtue of my experiences here and in other operations, some of which also involved both combat and peace keeping, I humbly offer these observations:

1. At the time, I thought I was bullet proof. None of us are. If you do not need to execute a frontal assault on a strong point to accomplish your mission, then don't. As the saying goes, “Fool's rush in where angels fear to tread.”

2. We must fight the tendency to view the rest of the world through “American eyes”. We, as Americans, tend to have an egotism that has and will blind us in our own efforts to operate. I could not, for the life me, understand until well after the fact, what the Somali people who were there that day could have been thinking. They were of a familial clan affiliated with the warlord Mohammed Aideed, and regardless of our intentions, to them, we were a foreign invader and they did not want us there. I had a disdain and a disregard for them and their ways. After I had linked up with the reaction force, I remember seeing a child trying, with all her might, to throw a stone, that was as large as her own head, at a HMMWV. Obviously, these people had the same disdain for us, but still, I couldn’t grasp it. You cannot disregard your opponent. That will inevitably result in an unnecessary loss and possibly humiliation for yourself, your unit, the army, and quite possibly for your nation. History is full of examples of how this lack of recognition has resulted in such losses, defeats, and humiliation. Put yourself in your opponent’s shoes. Understand his environment, his culture, and more importantly, his view of you. Do not dehumanize your opponent or allow your superiors or subordinates to do so. Ask yourself: Will he knuckle under to a significant show of force? Will he devise and construct a makeshift RPG? Will he lie down in the street and have women and children sit on top of him as cover while he strafes you with 7.62 mm automatic fire because he knows Americans won’t shoot at them? Simply stated, the rest of the world does not share our ways of doing business, worship, conduct of war, etc. Don’t be so arrogant as to think that your opponent will play by your rules. Understand that he will be watching and analyzing how you conduct operations. Much of the world does not share our prosperity and

security. Consequently, there are nations that have been fighting steadily in one conflict or another for decades. If we find ourselves sent to one of those countries for a peacekeeping mission, we can not afford to disregard the capabilities of our opponents based simply on shallow ideas of how technologically advanced we are, etc. Your opponent may be a thirteen year old boy and if you disregard him because of his age and your concept of the capabilities of an American boy, you will suffer for it, for he may very well have spent his entire life fighting in the jungles, mountains, deserts, or city streets, and has his own, extremely well developed, tactics, techniques, and procedures, and, he may fully intend to bring those capabilities to bear against you. Don't be arrogant, don't disregard, don't stereotype, think.

3. I clearly thought I was smarter than I really was. Sophomoric, is the word that best describes it. I was a junior Staff Sergeant. My failure to coordinate with the S2 was, in my opinion, inexcusable and the major issue here. I had been to the Ranger school, which teaches coordination with higher intelligence (S2), and I should have known better. Had I done so, this incident would not have happened. Train your subordinates down to your team leaders to analyze and plan. Teach them to seek more information about the current situation and where to find it. If this had become a habit for me instead of my relying on my PL who, for this mission, wasn't there, and, ironically, I didn't think I needed, we may not have ever even had an issue.
4. It is evident that I made judgments about my superiors and what was right and what was wrong. We all do it, but I am now very much on my guard not to become one of

those guys who walk around with the attitude of, “No one above me can plan, and no one below me can execute.” LTC Pinkham did not present the appearance of the “lean, mean, fighting machine,” but when it came down to it, he certainly behaved with the courage to ward off the over scrutiny of officers who outranked him and many other “arm chair quarterbacks.” He trusted the decisions of his subordinates and more importantly, expected his subordinates to make decisions, good or bad, allowing them to learn as they went. This point of leadership character, as well, has been scarce at times during my career.

5. Let your subordinates decide, plan, and execute with your intent and guidance. Fight the urge to micromanage.
6. Rules of engagement over the years have been changed significantly. Nowadays, we may defend ourselves if we are physically threatened with that force necessary to diminish the threat. I would have been able to fire warning shots that may or may not have been an effective use of force. The ROE should be well known and understood by each soldier so that they incorporate them into their actions as second nature, so there is no hesitation at the moment of truth.
7. I mentioned concern for my equipment in my thought process. That eventually became a non-issue since the vehicle was lost anyway. Care of equipment should be a part of your thought process, but perhaps not when it comes to trading the health of your soldiers over an inquiry or depleted paycheck.

8. My company leadership had made a decision to secure radios and COMSEC without providing the vehicle operators or even the hand receipt holders with keys to that equipment. This decision may have been justifiable in the garrison environment of Ft. Drum but in Somalia, resulted in having to leave the equipment with the truck and ultimately lose it. I guess the lesson learned there is the rules for routine matters also change with the environment.

9. As the leader of the PSD, responsibility for the actions on that day, and the results of those actions ultimately lay in my hands. Mistakes were made along with good and bad decisions. Understand that you will make mistakes and poor decisions. Don't try to hide this fact. Your superiors and subordinates will see right through it. Plan to minimize those instances. Make use of those around you who are more experienced. Listen to your subordinates. Learn from your own mistakes and more importantly, from the mistakes of others, you will be a better soldier and leader for it.

10. At the time, I thought I had violated the crowning principle of the Ranger Creed, which states, "Surrender is not a Ranger word". I have come to realize that the decision to withdraw did not constitute a surrender and to have stayed would have been a foolhardy endeavor which would have resulted in the injury, or death, of one, if not all of my men, and caused a major international incident. In retrospect, the only thing I truly surrendered was my pride. I had gone to basic training at Harmony Church on Ft Benning and had been a member of B CO, 9th BN, 2nd ITB. Our motto

was “Bravo Rangers, we’ll take the point!” I had been to the US Army Ranger school. I was trained to fight to win and complete the mission. Nothing in my career had prepared me to withdraw in the face of a hostile force. The decision to withdraw was made for the safety of my men and to prevent an incident, which at the very least would have meant violating the ROE by firing warning shots and at the worst would have meant firing into the crowd, causing an international incident and perhaps getting us all killed. The Ranger creed also states that “... under no circumstances will I ever embarrass my country.” US Forces undoubtedly lost face due to my actions, but the fallout would have been monumental had I ordered my men to fire into the crowd, or if we had all become casualties due to my decisions. The end results were a loss of face of U.S. Forces in Somalia, loss of a HMMWV, personal embarrassment to myself and, most importantly, the overall safe return to the United States of myself and seven other soldiers seven soldiers being able to return to America relatively unhurt.

11. My ego was bruised at the time, but in retrospect, for no good reason. Given the ROE and other circumstances, for instance, the lack of keys for the COMSEC equipment, I had little choice in my decisions, and plenty of oversight. I have come to realize by some of my own actions and observing the actions and conduct of superiors, peers, and subordinates alike, that ego plays a major role in many decisions that are made, and when it does, the majority of those decisions have appeared to me to be bad.