

December 20, 1993

## **NO MORE SOMALIAS: RECONSIDERING CLINTON'S DOCTRINE OF MILITARY HUMANITARIANISM**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The United States has long been a great humanitarian nation. Throughout its history, it has come to the aid of distressed people worldwide. Increasingly, these humanitarian efforts have involved the U.S. military, as when American servicemen helped cyclone victims in Bangladesh in 1991. Yet the most recent use of the American military for humanitarian relief, in Somalia, has been disastrous. George Bush's Operation Restore Hope and the follow-up United Nations efforts in Somalia have cost the lives of 26 U.S. servicemen. Nevertheless, the political chaos that caused the starvation in that country still continues. To avoid future humanitarian-inspired disasters, the Clinton Administration must not only come to terms with the lessons of Somalia, but establish some workable guidelines for addressing humanitarian crises abroad.

One of the most important lessons of Somalia, of course, is that using U.S. military forces for vaguely defined humanitarian purposes, and in cases where no U.S. interest is threatened, is unworkable. The effect of the U.S. military involvement in Somalia has been to squander American lives and treasure in a vain attempt to build a Somali nation. It also has eroded support among Americans for military engagement abroad, humanitarian or otherwise. Many Americans were rightly confused about the purpose of the U.S. operation in Somalia when they saw American aircraft firing into a crowd of the same Somalis the troops had been sent to help. Confusion turned to rage when a dead American soldier was dragged through Mogadishu's streets. Clearly, nation-building and humanitarianism are not one and the same.

Confusing the two is inevitable if the Clinton Administration continues on its present course. The Administration remains enthusiastic about expanding the U.S. role in United Nations peacekeeping operations. There are already eighteen such operations today, and this number is likely to grow. As a result, American forces could find themselves involved in conflicts around the world where no U.S. interests are threatened. Indeed,

America has no security interests in Liberia and Angola, the next two war-ravaged candidates for United Nation peacekeeping operations. American involvement in these potential quagmires would only inflame an emerging and dangerous isolationism that could weaken U.S. resolve to act if its real interests were to come under attack.

To make matters worse, the legal framework for humanitarian operations is undergoing what many consider to be a major shift. Some legal scholars favoring military humanitarianism now openly challenge the concept of state sovereignty because they believe it unnecessarily blocks humanitarian interventions by the U.N. and the U.S. The American-led Operation Provide Comfort to aid Iraqi Kurds in the aftermath of the Gulf War is viewed by many as an example of how U.N.-sanctioned military actions can serve a humanitarian purpose against the will of a sovereign nation—in this case, Iraq. The Somalia operation has further eroded the concept of sovereignty.

In order to avoid future debacles like Somalia, preserve public support for using the American military for humanitarian crisis abroad, and more important, public support for defending vital American interests, the Clinton Administration should:

- ✓ **Intervene militarily in humanitarian crises that are brought about by natural disasters.** America's armed forces have been extremely valuable to humanitarian operations abroad. In 1991, for example, American Marines and sailors conducted Operation Sea Angel to aid victims of the cyclone and devastating flooding that struck Bangladesh. These actions earn the U.S. untold international good will, and pose a minimum risk to American lives, yet they represent no long-term political commitment to the country benefitted. However, these missions should not distract the U.S. armed forces from their primary mission of defending America's vital interests.<sup>1</sup>
- ✓ **Employ the armed forces in response to man-made crises only when a national interest is at stake.** Intervening in civil conflicts abroad in which the U.S. lacks a strategic interest, no matter how noble the motives, is a recipe for failure. Given the inevitable loss of American life, the U.S. will lack the staying power to see such operations through. No military mission can be long sustained unless some national interest is at stake. Indeed, undertaking purely humanitarian operations risks undermining the American people's support for military operations that are in the defense of vital national interests.
- ✓ **Generally operate outside of the United Nations framework when using force to respond to man-made crises.** Involving the United Nations in American military actions offers some minor advantages, but unfortunately the drawbacks are significant. One of these is increasing U.N. influence over when and where U.S. forces will be committed, and greater control of the U.N. over the command of U.S. troops in the field. Working within a U.N. framework on humanitarian issues also

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1 Kim R. Holmes, ed., *A Safe and Prosperous America: A U.S. Foreign and Defense Policy Blueprint* (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, May 1993), provides a U.S. national interest framework, including strategic regions of vital interest, mainly Europe, East Asia, and the Persian Gulf.

has the potential of weakening the concept of national sovereignty, which is not in the interest of the U.S.

- ✓ **Avoid U.S. involvement in U.N. peacemaking operations.** The U.S. should consider participating in future U.N. peacekeeping operations. These are defined as operations in which all sides have explicitly agreed to cease hostilities and to accept a U.N. presence. Even then, however, the U.S. should participate in these missions only if it has particular expertise without which the mission would not be feasible. Peacemaking operations, however, should be ruled out. These are operations designed to create peace where none yet exists.

## WHAT IS MILITARY HUMANITARIANISM?

What constitutes humanitarian aid is an open question. In fact, there is no clear definition of humanitarian aid under American law. Food, water, clothing, and shelter are widely acknowledged as the basics. However, other items, including medicine, toys, and educational material have been considered as humanitarian aid. The Reagan Administration viewed giving uniforms and telecommunication equipment to the Nicaraguan contras as humanitarian aid.

When delivering humanitarian aid, armed force or military equipment sometimes must be used. Victims of humanitarian crises often are not easily reached. Roads to places where people are starving or dying may have been rendered impassable by war or blockades. The 1948 Berlin airlift of food, medicine, and other essentials is a good example of using military planes for a humanitarian operation. Moreover, military organizational and logistical capabilities, which the United Nations and other relief agencies generally lack, can surmount many hurdles to the delivery of aid.

The U.S. armed forces have been increasingly active in humanitarian relief. In 1991, they took part in eighteen foreign disaster relief operations. This was more than twice the annual average for the previous six years, and included Operation Provide Comfort—an American-led effort to assist Kurdish Iraqis fleeing persecution by Saddam Hussein in the wake of the Persian Gulf War.<sup>2</sup> It also included Operation Sea Angel, the American response to the devastating cyclone and flooding that took 138,000 lives in Bangladesh in April 1991. Some 8,000 American Marines and sailors returning from the Persian Gulf War and stationed in Okinawa were dispatched to assist with the international relief effort in Bangladesh, which had to contend with impassable waterways and roads. The American troops transported food already within the country and provided 1.7 million Bangladeshis with 6,000 tons of relief supplies.

The U.S. military role in humanitarian relief goes well beyond providing logistical support for the delivery of supplies. The U.S. Air Force has enforced a “no-fly” zone in Iraq since 1991. American humanitarian concerns also brought the U.S. Army and Marine

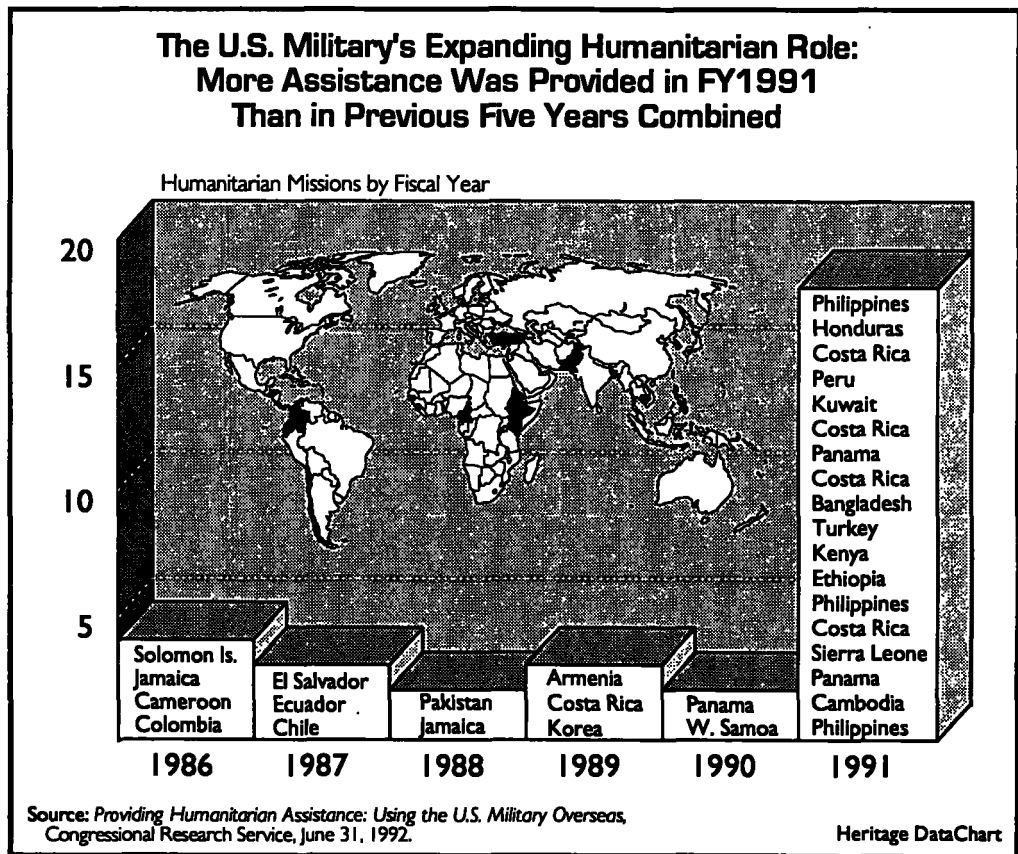
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<sup>2</sup> "Providing Humanitarian Assistance: Using the U.S. Military Overseas," Congressional Research Service, 92-619F, July 31, 1992, p. 6.

Corps to Somalia for an ambitious effort at reconstructing Somalia's economic and political system.

The expanded humanitarian role of the U.S. armed forces has resulted largely from the demise of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. The Pentagon previously had argued that such efforts drew it away from its primary mission of countering the Soviet threat. The most recent edition of the annual National Security Strategy of the United States, released last January, reflects the changed times. Not only does it embrace humanitarian assistance missions, but it recognizes that such missions "must now be undertaken in the midst of civil war and anarchy."<sup>3</sup> The Clinton Administration's "Bottom-Up Review" of U.S. defense needs meanwhile recognizes the need to "shape and size" U.S. military forces for intervention operations.<sup>4</sup> The U.S. armed forces thus are poised for many more humanitarian actions.

The American people, however, are less enthusiastic about committing American troops to humanitarian operations. In the wake of the troubled Somalia undertaking, public support for using the U.S. military for solely humanitarian purposes has fallen precipitously.<sup>5</sup>



<sup>3</sup> *National Security Strategy of the United States* (The White House, January 1993), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> "The Bottom-Up Review: Forces for a New Era," Department of Defense, September 1, 1993, p. 13.

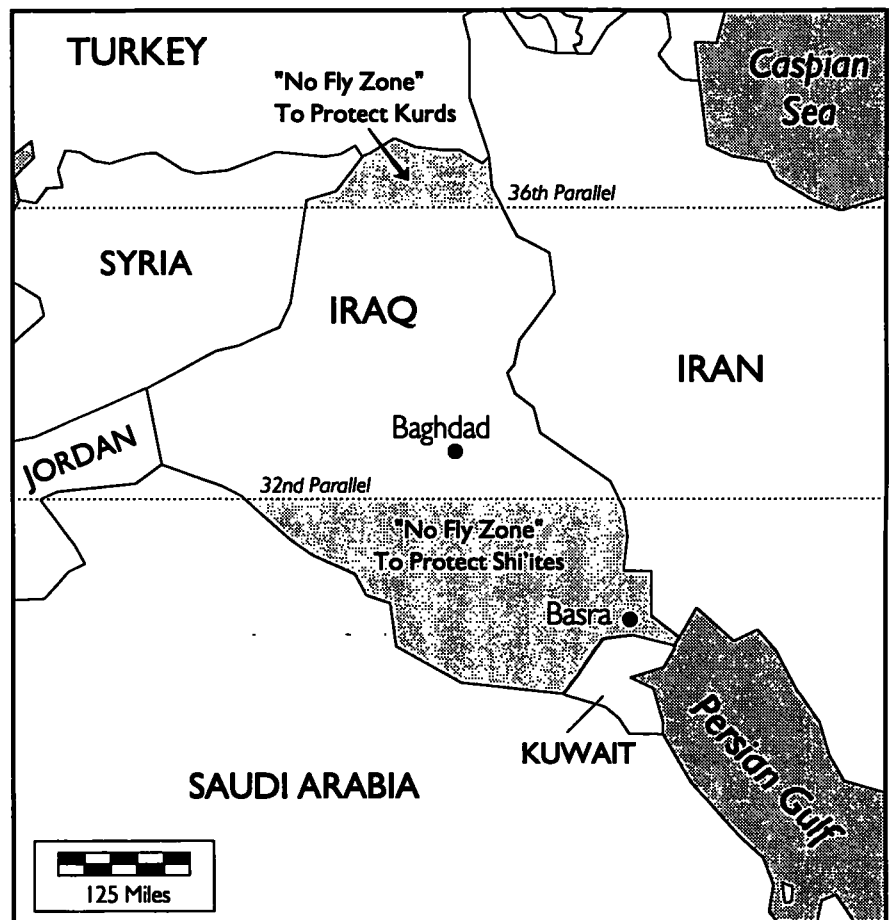
<sup>5</sup> Support for such undertakings has fallen from 62 percent of the American public in December 1992 to 42 percent in September 1993. "U.S. Public's Views on International Intervention and the Use of Force: Key Findings," United States Information Agency, November 9, 1993.

## THE POST-COLD WAR RECORD

The first major humanitarian effort after the fall of the Berlin Wall was Operation Provide Comfort in 1991. This American-led effort mobilized 13,000 allied service personnel to provide approximately 17,000 tons of tents, blankets, clothing, water, and other supplies to 1.5 million Kurdish refugees in Iraq who were fleeing persecution by Saddam Hussein.<sup>6</sup> To frustrate the Iraqi dictator's aggression against the Kurds, and to protect the relief operation, the allies imposed a no-fly zone in northern Iraq. Allied personnel also escorted Kurdish refugees from their deadly mountain hideouts to several temporary transit sites in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Aid activities in Iraq were eventually turned over to U.N. officials, who had been reluctant to assist the allied coalition for fear of retaliation by Iraqi authorities. Eventually, the Iraqi government

was forced to accept a contingent of 500 U.N. guards from Denmark, Poland, and other countries. Following the final withdrawal of allied personnel from Kurdistan, in July 1991, these lightly armed U.N. guards protected U.N. relief activities, backed up by a rapid deployment force of some 2,500 allied troops stationed in southeastern Turkey. This arrangement continues today and the Kurds remain relatively safe from Iraqi persecution.



Not only does this arrangement aid the Kurds, but along with a no-fly zone established in southern Iraq in August 1992 to protect rebellious Shiite Muslims, this intervention serves U.S. interests. It shields active opposition that could encourage the overthrow of

6 "Providing Humanitarian Assistance: Using the U.S. Military Overseas," p. 6.

Saddam Hussein, which should be an important U.S. goal. The Iraqi dictator remains a threat to vital U.S. interests.

Nonetheless, Operation Provide Comfort represented an unprecedented infringement on state sovereignty by the international community for humanitarian reasons. U.N. Security Council Resolution 688, which sanctioned Provide Comfort, determined for the first time in Security Council history that humanitarian suffering within a member state was a threat to international peace and security. The resolution demanded that "Iraq allow immediate access by international humanitarian organizations to all those in need of assistance." It also sanctioned the imposition of the no-fly zone.

## **FROM PROVIDING COMFORT TO RESTORING HOPE**

It is a short step for the U.N. from denying national sovereignty to involving itself in another nation's civil war. This step was taken by the Clinton Administration when it expanded U.S. operations in Somalia from humanitarian relief to nation-building.

The road to the Somali disaster began, of course, with George Bush. By December 1992, when President George Bush began sending 25,000 U.S. troops to Somalia in Operation Restore Hope, starvation had claimed the lives of over 100,000 Somalis. Moreover, as many as 4.5 million Somalis were thought to be at risk of starvation. This suffering was occurring despite a massive food relief effort by the international community in Somalia.

Large-scale American food relief efforts to Somalia began in January of 1992. In the first eight months of that year, the U.S. delivered 80,000 metric tons of food to Somalia. This effort made the U.S. the largest donor of emergency relief food to Somalia.

The Pentagon joined the Somalia food relief effort in August 1992. American C-130 aircraft based in neighboring Kenya carried relief supplies into Somalia in Operation Provide Relief. Soon after this airlift commenced, the Pentagon began assisting the United Nations peacekeeping operation in Somalia. The U.S. Joint Staff drew up military options for overcoming the humanitarian crisis. The U.S. Air Force also transported 500 Pakistani peacekeepers to Mogadishu to improve security at its airport and seaport.<sup>7</sup>

The American airlift failed to end the starvation in Somalia. Roving bands of Somalis, many equipped with heavy caliber weapons, extorted money and food from the relief agencies operating throughout Somalia. These bandits demanded payment for what they euphemistically termed technical services, otherwise known as protection money. Sometimes food would be stolen outright. Many of the bandits were allied with clan warlords. By December 1992, only 10 percent to 20 percent of the relief food was reaching its intended destination within Somalia.

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<sup>7</sup> The ill-fated United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) was authorized to deploy a 3,500-member peacekeeping force. Its mission was limited to security, though it was restricted to conducting only defensive measures. The size of the UNOSOM peacekeeping contingent never grew beyond the 500 Pakistanis.

As the Somalia situation worsened, U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali called on President Bush in November of 1992 to take action. Meanwhile, the White House was being flooded with correspondence from Americans who were concerned about the starvation in Somalia. Thus, on December 4, 1992, President Bush announced that U.S. troops would be sent to Somalia. This was a dramatic turnaround for the Bush Administration, which throughout the fall had opposed armed American intervention in Somalia. Operation Restore Hope was established in accordance with U.N. Security Council Resolution 794. This resolution determined that the "magnitude of the human tragedy in Somalia" constituted a threat to international peace and security, thus permitting the use of force under Chapter 7 of the U.N. Charter.

President Bush emphasized that the U.S. mission to Somalia would be limited in duration and purpose. In the nationally televised address announcing the mission, he stated, "Our mission has a limited objective—to open supply routes, to get the food moving and to prepare the way for a U.N. peace-keeping force to keep it moving." The President added: "This operation is not open ended. We will not stay longer than is absolutely necessary." The U.S. role, Bush explained, was to catalyze widespread international participation in a U.N. peacekeeping mission for Somalia to well beyond the size and scope of the failing and feeble Pakistani effort.

The American mission in Somalia, the Unified Task Force (UNITAF), improved the security situation in Somalia and all but ended the starvation there by spring 1993. As a result, U.S. special envoy to Somalia Robert Oakley declared on March 2 that Operation Restore Hope was a success. On May 4, Lt. General Robert Johnson turned over the command of UNITAF to Lt. General Cevik Bir of Turkey. At this point the U.N. force consisted of 18,000 troops representing 35 nations.

All of this changed, however, when the Clinton Administration took office. At this point, the U.N. mission in Somalia was altered and expanded. On March 26, 1993, U.N. Security Council Resolution 814 established the United Nations Operation in Somalia II (UNOSOM II), one objective of which was to assist in the rehabilitation of Somalia's political institutions and economy. The U.N. military force also was charged with promoting a political settlement and national reconciliation between Somalia's warring clans. State Department official David Shinn in August acknowledged that this mandate represented "basically... re-creating a country."<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine K. Albright suggested that it was necessary to raise Somalia from a failed state into an emerging democracy.<sup>9</sup> To date, seventy U.N. peacekeepers, including 26 Americans, have been killed in Somalia. Meanwhile, prospects for reconciliation among Somalia's clans remain remote.

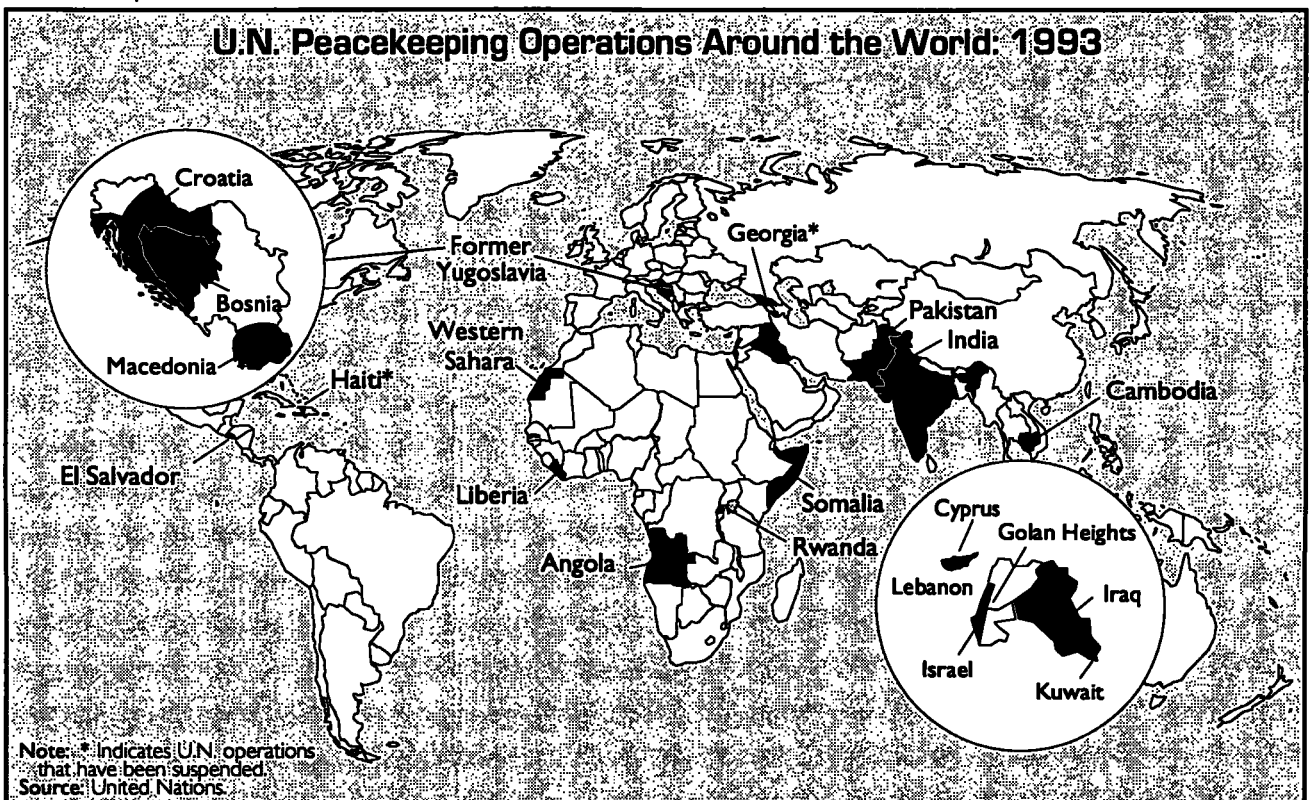
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<sup>8</sup> "U.S. Troops to Remain in Somalia," *The Washington Post*, August 11, 1993, p. A1.

<sup>9</sup> Madeleine K. Albright, "Yes, there is a reason to be in Somalia," *The New York Times*, August 10, 1993, p. A19.

## PEACEKEEPING OR PEACEMAKING?

That the U.N. peacekeeping operation in Somalia has been so troubled should come as no surprise: UNOSOM II departs fundamentally from the model of successful past U.N. peacekeeping efforts. Traditionally, a U.N. peacekeeping force has merely monitored or enforced a cease-fire agreed to by former combatants, usually countries but also sometimes guerilla groups fighting a civil war. A cease-fire agreement is critical to U.N. peacekeeping, as it suggests that the former combatants prefer peace to continued war. The U.N. operation in the Sinai is an example of a traditional U.N. peacekeeping effort.<sup>10</sup> The U.N. Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) force acts as a buffer and monitors the 1979 peace treaty between Israel and Egypt pertaining to the Sinai.



By contrast, UNOSOM II in Somalia is truly a “peacemaking” operation. The U.N. troops entered a civil war involving at least a dozen factions. This intervention came against the wishes of General Mohamed Farah Aideed, the most powerful combatant. As there was no peace to enforce in Somalia, no steps toward disarmament were taken. Somalia was, and remains, a cauldron.

Despite the senseless loss of American life and eroding public support for the U.S. presence in Somalia, the Administration has pushed ahead with its United Nations agenda, including support for peacemaking operations. A recent Administration-sup-

<sup>10</sup> See Andrew J. Cowin, “Expanding United Nations Peacekeeping Role Poses Risk for America,” *Heritage Foundation Backgrounder* No. 917, October 13, 1992, for an overview of U.N. peacekeeping.



ported amendment to the 1994 defense bill had the United States contributing \$10 million for an upgrading of the United Nation's peacekeeping center, or "war room," in New York. This amendment was defeated on September 13, 1993, largely because of congressional uproar over the Administration's Somalia policy.

Still the Administration has pressed on to bolster U.N. peacekeeping capabilities. Its September "Bottom-Up Review" of American defense needs accepts peacekeeping operations as a fundamental mission for future American forces. Meanwhile, National Security Advisor Anthony Lake has established humanitarian efforts as a prime U.S. foreign policy objective.<sup>11</sup>

## **NEW RIGHTS FOR THE U.N.: THE CHALLENGE TO STATE SOVEREIGNTY**

It is a cruel paradox that with the demise of the American-Soviet conflict there are more candidates for U.N. peacekeeping operations today than ever before. Many African states, some of which were propped up by Cold War patrons, are collapsing, victimized by tribal conflict and weak governments. Somalia, unfortunately, is not unique in Africa. Zaire is teetering on the edge of civil war. The Sudan is in the midst of a vicious civil war, as is Angola. Even Europe is not exempt: the former Yugoslavia is only the most obvious tragedy in a region where ethnic and religious conflicts have erupted with a vengeance. In fact, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) this fall estimated that some 44 million people worldwide are displaced by violence and persecution.<sup>12</sup> The humanitarian demands brought about by this turmoil are enormous. Some scholars estimate that there are over 1.2 billion vulnerable people who may require emergency assistance.<sup>13</sup>

This turmoil is occurring against an intellectual backdrop that is becoming more supportive of humanitarian interventions at the expense of state sovereignty. For example, former French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas claimed that the international community has the "right to intervene" in humanitarian crises and should be prepared to violate national boundaries to alleviate the human suffering caused by repression, civil disorder, interstate conflict, or natural disasters.<sup>14</sup> A recent Carnegie Endowment for International Peace study, *Changing Our Ways*, states that, "A new principle of international relations is arising: the destruction or displacement of large groups of people within states justifies international intervention."<sup>15</sup>

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11 *The Washington Times*, September 22, 1993, p. A4.

12 "State of the World's Refugees: The Challenge of Protection," United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1993.

13 Larry Minear and Thomas G. Weiss, *Humanitarian Action in Times of War* (Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993), p. 22.

14 Larry Minear, Thomas G. Weiss, and Kurt M. Campbell, "Humanitarianism and War: Learning the Lessons from Recent Armed Conflicts," Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies Occasional Paper # 8, 1991.

15 Carnegie Endowment National Commission on America and the New World, *Changing Our Ways: America and the New World* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1992), p. 51.

This desire to violate state sovereignty arose primarily as a response to intransigent governments denying outside relief agencies access to their suffering populations. This, for example, has occurred in the Sudan since 1989. The Islamic fundamentalist Sudanese government has frustrated international relief efforts because it believes that outsiders are aiding rebels in the south of Sudan.<sup>16</sup> The Sudanese government, fearing that its interference with international relief efforts could make it the next candidate for an international humanitarian intervention, was vocal in denouncing Operation Provide Comfort as a Western power grab.

Concerns by the Sudan and other countries about the Somalia undertaking were particularly strong because it was sanctioned by the United Nations, a traditional protector of state sovereignty. Indeed, Article 2 of the 1945 U.N. Charter establishes state sovereignty as a cornerstone of the organization. Paragraph 4 states, "All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state...." Paragraph 7 prohibits the U.N. itself from interfering in matters within the domestic jurisdiction of member states. These provisions appear to invalidate any right of the international community to intervene in another state's affairs, humanitarian motives notwithstanding.

Yet other provisions of the U.N. Charter challenge state sovereignty. Legal scholars advocating humanitarian intervention claim that the Charter allows an exception to Article 2(7) in the case of a "threat to the peace" under Chapter 7. While a threat to the peace historically has been taken to mean a military threat to other countries, these proponents argue that peace can be endangered by extreme suffering or the abuse of human rights.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, U.N. Resolution 794 authorizes Operation Restore Hope to "use all necessary means to establish as soon as possible a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations in Somalia" by referring to the Chapter 7 threat to international peace and security clause.

While U.N. Secretary General Boutros-Ghali has remained attuned to the concerns of many states for preserving the integrity of sovereignty, he has also spoken of redefining sovereignty to address humanitarian needs. Of the Somalia intervention, Boutros-Ghali said in May 1992, "Despite the provisions of the Charter that the Organization should not intervene in domestic matters, Member States find it more and more difficult to regard any conflict as domestic or internal. It is these considerations that have led the Security Council to set up the new operation in Somalia, which includes military personnel to protect the delivery of humanitarian relief supplies. This is an important innovation."<sup>18</sup>

The legality of humanitarian interventions by the international community against a state's will is uncertain. The evidence, including the text of the U.N. Charter, its interpretation, and the practice of states, seems to weigh against any such right.<sup>19</sup>

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16 See Herman J. Cohen, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Statement before the Subcommittee on Africa of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Washington, D.C., March 10, 1993.

17 Jost Delbruck, "A Fresh Look at Humanitarian Intervention Under the Authority of the United Nations," *Indiana Law Journal*, Vol. 67 (Fall 1992), as cited in "The Use of Force in Civil Conflicts for Humanitarian Purposes: Prospects for the Post-Cold War Era," Congressional Research Service, 92-899F, December 2, 1992, p. 15.

18 U.N. Press Release SG/SM/4748, p. 5.

19 Theodor Meron, "Commentary on Humanitarian Intervention," in Lori Fisler Damrosch and David J. Scheffer, eds., *Law*

Notwithstanding the dubious legality of humanitarian interventions, it is clear that the Iraq and Somalia operations have established precedents for what appears to be an incipient right of the international community to intervene in a state for humanitarian purposes. In regards to Washington's Bosnia policy, National Security Advisor Lake said that "we are thinking through the questions [of U.S. policy options in Bosnia] and we are certainly acutely aware that we are making case law."<sup>20</sup> By pressing ahead with the Somalia operation, it appears that the Clinton Administration does not want the precedent it has helped to establish to fail and work against future U.N. peacekeeping operations.

## RECONSIDERING MILITARY HUMANITARIANISM

The humanitarian impulse of the Clinton Administration must be reconsidered. Noble intentions can have ignoble consequences. The price of failure in Somalia has been high, including the lives of 26 Americans. Such a price can be afforded if U.S. security or interests are endangered, but no one argues that the civil war in Somalia threatens American national interests.

The Clinton Administration, which is more supportive in general of Somalia-like peacekeeping operations than the Bush Administration, needs to change the way it thinks about humanitarianism. In order to avoid such debacles as Somalia, maintain public support for defending vital American interests abroad, and challenge the troubling trend toward the dissolution of state sovereignty, the Clinton Administration should:

- ✓ **Intervene militarily in humanitarian crises that are brought about by natural disasters.**

American arms and military equipment have been used to save countless lives in humanitarian crises worldwide. The U.S. armed forces possesses capabilities that the United Nations, other relief agencies, and national governments lack. Such capabilities become particularly valuable when cyclones, tornadoes, and other calamities strike suddenly. When a cyclone and flooding struck Bangladesh in 1991, Operation Sea Angel saved the lives of many people in that country. These operations earn the U.S. untold international good will. They also make Americans proud.

Casualties are inevitable in relief operations, the nature of which is inherently dangerous because of potentially bad weather, the high tempo of operations, and unfamiliar terrain. However, it is all but certain that these casualties will be fewer than those incurred in a military operation. Twenty-six Americans have been killed in Somalia because they were placed in the middle of a civil war. Many more American servicemen will lose their lives needlessly unless humanitarian operations are more restricted.

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and Force in the New International Order (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), p. 213.

20 Jacob Heilbrunn, "Lake Inferior," *The New Republic*, September 22 & 27, 1993, p. 34.

The use of American troops for humanitarian operations must not be allowed to distract U.S. armed forces from their primary mission: fighting wars in defense of vital U.S. interests. It is troubling that the role of America's armed forces in humanitarian operations abroad is expanding at a time when the Clinton Administration is unwisely cutting America's military might.<sup>21</sup> During the Cold War, humanitarian operations were opposed by the Pentagon for fear that they would detract from its primary mission of countering the Soviet threat. Today, these missions threaten to weaken America's defense capabilities as U.S. forces become overextended with fewer resources.

Humanitarian operations have another potential drawback. They inevitably harm the martial spirit of America's troops. While participating in Operation Provide Relief, a U.S. Air Force Sergeant commented, "It's kind of pleasant to be out here doing something for somebody instead of making war. We're feeding people, not bombing them."<sup>22</sup> But "bombing people" is precisely what U.S. forces are for. There is no other reason for the Pentagon to exist except to organize, outfit, and train combat troops to prevail in battle over America's enemies. Not only does the mindset expressed by the U.S. airman weaken America's ability to win battles, it also bears on the safety of the troops. A soldier accustomed to handing out food will lose the skills and training needed to protect himself in hostile situations.

While remaining alert to the dangers of fostering complacency among its personnel, the U.S. will still want to provide humanitarian assistance to victims of natural disasters. These humanitarian efforts are relatively low in cost and earn America friends worldwide. The U.S. need not become involved in failing U.N. peacemaking operations to demonstrate its commitment to humanitarian principles.

✓ **Employ the armed forces in response to man-made crises only when a national interest is at stake.**

Man-made humanitarian crises result from war or other acts of political violence. A humanitarian crisis exists in Bosnia where the conflict between the Serbs, Bosnians, and Croats rages through its second year. The Sudan is in the midst of a catastrophic humanitarian crisis. Suffering among the Sudanese is on par with that in Somalia before Operation Restore Hope began in December 1992.

Yet these conflicts pose no threat to the United States.<sup>23</sup> Although tragic, the upheaval in Bosnia and the Sudan presents no threat to political and economic stability in regions crucially important to the U.S.

Humanitarian operations in conflict areas where no American interests are at stake damage the credibility of the United States. They squander an American commander in chief's political capital at home and his credibility abroad. National Security Advi-

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21 See Lawrence T. DiRita, Baker Spring, and John Luddy, "Thumbs Down to the Bottom-Up Review," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 957, September 24, 1993, for a critique of the Clinton Administration's defense policies.

22 *The Washington Times*, August 31, 1992, A7.

23 See Holmes, *op. cit.*

sor Lake asserts that "Our humanitarian actions nurture the American public's support for our engagement abroad."<sup>24</sup> But failed humanitarian actions have the opposite effect. The failure in Somalia may very well embolden America's enemies, such as Iraq and North Korea, who must now wonder if President Clinton could command support among the American people for a military action against them. The Congress, after all, gave President Bush less than overwhelming support for launching Operation Desert Storm against Iraq.

The costs are not all paid by the U.S., however. For example, the primarily European U.N. peacekeeping force in Bosnia, which has been unwilling to undertake the deadly mission of confronting aggression, has settled on improving roads for convoys carrying food and medicine relief. These improved roads, however, have also made it easier for the Serbs, Bosnians, and Croats to move troops and weapons. Thus, the U.N. inadvertently has prolonged Bosnia's bloody conflict.

✓ **Generally operate outside of the United Nations framework when using force to respond to man-made crises.**

In cases where the U.S. undertakes military operations for humanitarian reasons, it should try to avoid involving the U.N. The U.N. has the potential of entrapping the U.S. in costly failures. This was the case in Somalia. It is doubtful whether Washington would have shifted from relief operations to intervening with 25,000 troops had the U.S. not been working closely with the U.N. Moreover, it is unlikely that the U.S. would still be in Somalia were it not for the U.N.'s nation-building agenda.

America's participation in U.N. humanitarian operations also works to restrict its freedom of action. President Bush went to the United Nations to gain approval for launching Operation Desert Storm in 1991. This approval befitted the ex-President's "New World Order" vision. However, approval had its costs. Most apparent, it established a precedent seized upon by the Clinton Administration. Now the assumption is widespread that America needs U.N. "approval" before it engages its own military forces abroad. This assumption was revealed clearly in the Clinton Administration's claim that Secretary General Boutros-Ghali's disapproval precluded it from bombing Serbian positions in Bosnia.

Operating outside of the U.N. framework also will minimize the risk to American lives. When U.S. troops are kept under American command, they are not dependent upon the U.N.'s weak peacekeeping command capabilities. Keeping the chain of command exclusively American will also minimize potentially disastrous security breaches, which have been experienced in UNOSOM II.

An American President may want U.N. approval of his military actions for political reasons abroad. However, this advantage must be weighed against the many disadvantages which U.N. involvement will incur.

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<sup>24</sup> Text of "From Containment to Enlargement," speech delivered to the John Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, Washington, D.C., September 21, 1993, p. 10.

Often U.N. approval is sought to give a U.S. military mission the "moral" stamp of the international community. The U.N. has no inherent moral virtue, however. U.N.-sanctioned or U.N.-led operations are in no way morally superior to unilateral or multilateral operations among U.S. allies.<sup>25</sup> Ultimately, the consequences of a military action determine its morality, not the participation of the U.N. Whether or not the U.S. could win over China's support for the U.N. Security Council Resolution authorizing military action against Iraq had no bearing on the morality of the American cause in the Persian Gulf War.

Operating apart from the United Nations would have another benefit: it would avoid bolstering that body's right to intervene in the internal affairs of states for humanitarian reasons. Although the balance of legal evidence comes down against the so-called right of intervention, continued interventions sanctioned by the United Nations will help to swing that balance by building legal precedents for U.N. action. This would come at the expense of state sovereignty.

The virtues of state sovereignty should not be overlooked. Many consider the principles of sovereignty and nonintervention among the greatest achievements of modern international legal doctrine, providing the limited international order that now exists. Their demise could usher in an even more chaotic world. Disregarding sovereignty, for example, could fuel civil conflicts. Rebel groups may believe that their interests are best served by involving the international community in their country's affairs, possibly with a peacekeeping operation that would weaken the government's political and military advantage. They may very well figure that this involvement could be most assuredly brought about by making conditions horrendous enough to warrant a humanitarian intervention.

In today's era of turmoil inspired by rampant nationalism, the U.S. has an interest in promoting stability. Yet it is hard to envision how international stability can be strengthened by systematically undermining the traditional international system based on state sovereignty. Of course, the U.S. will want to assert the right to violate any nation's sovereignty when its security interests are threatened. Any such American action should hinge upon U.S. security, not what the U.N. might determine. The U.S., for example, has an interest in seeing that the U.N.-sanctioned long-term monitoring of Iraq's military capabilities is firmly established. Responding to a tangible threat to U.S. security, however, is not the same as supporting intervention by the international community for the purpose of addressing a humanitarian crisis. This latter is a recipe for chaos given the extent of crises or potential crises worldwide.

✓ **Avoid U.S. involvement in U.N. "peacemaking" operations.**

President Clinton announced in a September 27 speech to the United Nations General Assembly that the U.S. would ask four questions when considering whether to participate in U.N. peacekeeping operations. They are: 1) Is there a clear threat to international peace? 2) Does the operation have clear objectives? 3) Is there a clear end in sight for the operation? 4) Are the costs of intervention clearly understood?

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25 Ernest W. LeFever, "Reining in the U.N.," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (1993), p. 18.

Clinton's criteria notably lack any mention of American interests. This suggests that the Administration has yet to learn one of the most important lessons to come out of America's involvement in Somalia: American national interests must be on the line before U.S. military operations can succeed. Otherwise, American troops are bound to flounder with neither national support nor staying power.

The U.S. runs a grave risk participating in peacekeeping operations. In any civil conflict, one of the belligerents will have an incentive to further involve the U.S. The best way to do this is to attack American peacekeepers. Indeed, Somalian clan leader Ali Mahdi reportedly provoked conflict with the U.N. peacekeepers in the hope that the American-led force would take action against his rival, General Mohamed Farah Aidid. Moreover, peacekeeping operations must contend with savage and intractable nationalist conflicts. Under these conditions, the treaties and cease-fires keeping peacekeepers from becoming full-fledged combatants are tenuous. The lesson is clear: The U.S. should minimize its involvement in U.N. peacekeeping, limiting it to strictly logistical and financial support of traditional U.N. peacekeeping operations.

Of course, the U.N. now has gone beyond traditional notions of peacekeeping to "peacemaking"—to enforcing a peace among combatants who refuse to stop fighting. However, peacemaking operations like UNOSOM II are fundamentally flawed. U.N. peacekeepers sent into conflicts cannot remain neutral. This has been shown in Somalia, where the UNOSOM II forces ended up opposing General Aideed. This was inevitable. Aideed, as the strongest Somali warlord, had the most to lose by the U.N. intervention. His attacking UNOSOM II forces was predictable.

U.N. peacekeepers are not neutral, they are merely combatants who likely will prolong conflict by siding with weaker parties. Once the fighting escalates, it can be expected that peacekeepers will retreat. This was the U.S. reaction in Somalia. There is no evidence throughout history that an effective domestic government can be imposed by an international authority such as the United Nations.<sup>26</sup>

There is yet another problem with U.N. peacekeeping operations: they can weaken American defense capabilities. Representative Ike Skelton (D-MO) charged this past October that America's peacekeeping commitments may so degrade the armed forces' warfighting capability that it will be impossible to carry out the national military strategy.<sup>27</sup> Skelton noted that peacekeeping trends under the Clinton Administration could undermine the U.S. armed forces' capability to fight and win two major regional conflicts "nearly simultaneously." The Clinton Administration's defense force will be too small to fight these two wars plus all the additional peacekeeping operations envisioned by the U.N.

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<sup>26</sup> The U.S., of course, did impose an effective government on Japan and Germany after World War II. But these governments were imposed by the U.S. and its allies, who were occupying those countries, and not by the U.N.

<sup>27</sup> Special Orders Speech, October 4, 1993.

## CONCLUSION

The U.S. has a great humanitarian tradition, having often eased the suffering of people worldwide. In the past couple of years, American relief has involved the use of U.S. armed forces. However, the most recent humanitarian-inspired use of American forces for humanitarian purposes, in Somalia, has failed miserably. It has become clear that good motives are not enough. It is now time to reassess the Clinton Administration's policy of using military force to advance humanitarian goals.

To be sure, Americans want to be generous supporters of humanitarian efforts abroad. But they do not want to see American servicemen dying at the hands of the people whom they are helping. Unfortunately, this will be the result if the Clinton Administration presses on with its expansive agenda for United Nations peacekeeping.

Clinton's agenda will not advance American interests. Indeed, if Clinton continues his present course of wanting to expand the U.S. role in U.N. humanitarian operations, the result will be a policy driven by the agenda of the United Nations. U.N. "peacemaking" operations are dangerous and fundamentally flawed. Not only do they threaten American lives and reduce American credibility, but they risk encouraging dangerous isolationism that could deter Presidents from using force to defend vital American interests.

American diplomacy should not be bound by iron laws. There may be rare occasions when the U.S. armed forces will want to join some U.N. humanitarian operation even if no U.S. interest is threatened. However, doing this should be the exception rather than the rule. As a rule the U.S. should not commit forces to combat unless some national interest is endangered. To do otherwise is to flirt with disaster.

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Dan Lewis assisted with the researching of this study.

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