



0. BLACK HAWKS IN SOMALIA - Story Preface

1. SOMALIA IN TROUBLE

2. OPERATION RESTORE HOPE

3. MISSION OBJECTIVE

4. BLACK HAWKS IN SOMALIA

5. MOGADISHU

6. THE RAID

7. BLACK HAWK GOING DOWN!

8. DEATH

9. A HORNET'S NEST

10. MISGUIDED POLICIES?

11. OUTNUMBERED!

12. RESCUE

13. THE FIRST BIN LADEN BATTLE

14. THE REAL HEROES

The U.S. Department of Defense has provided this image of a Black Hawk helicopter flying over Mogadishu, Somalia on the 1st of December, 1992. The public-domain photo, taken by Tech Sgt. Perry Heimer during the course of his duties, has the following description: "Aerial view, right side profile, of a US Marine helicopter as it flies over a MOGADISHU residential area on a patrol mission to look for signs of hostilities. This mission is in direct support of Operation Restore Hope." Online via U.S. Department of Defense.

Black Hawks are an important front-line asset the U.S. Army uses for air assault, air cavalry and aeromedical evacuation. They are designed to carry eleven combat-loaded air assault troops. A Black Hawk can move a 105-millimeter howitzer and 30 rounds of ammunition. Appropriately modified, it can serve as a command and control unit. Patrolling from above, the UH-60 is a reassuring presence to endangered people on the ground.

Igor Sikorsky, the inventor of helicopters, once commented on their significance:

If a man is in need of rescue, an airplane can come in and throw flowers on him, and that's just about all. But a direct lift aircraft could come in and save his life.

When American peacekeeping troops first went to Somalia, their chief objective was not to use Black Hawks to save the lives of combat soldiers. After all, the United States and Somalia were not at war. Their mission was humanitarian aid assistance. But on 3-4 October 1993, when U.S. soldiers fought their longest and deadliest battle since the Vietnam War, the Black Hawks had a different job to do. Les Aspin, then Secretary of Defense, had earlier stated America's changed objective:

...President Clinton has directed that U.S. forces remain [in Somalia] long enough to complete their mission and no longer. The completion of the mission chiefly concerns security in Somalia.

For U.S. combat troops, I think there are three items on the checklist. First, the security issue in South Mogadishu [an Aidid stronghold] must be settled. Second, we must make real progress toward taking the heavy weapons out of the hands of the warlords. Third, there must be credible police forces in major population centers. When these three conditions are met, I believe we can remove the U.S. Quick Reaction Force from Mogadishu...

In the meantime, President Clinton has given us clear direction to stay the course with other nations to help Somalia once again provide for its people. This is what the new world asks of American leadership and American partnership.

All well and good. But one might ask this question: What happens if the Somalis fight back?

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/BLACK-HAWKS-IN-SOMALIA-Black-Hawk-Down>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/BLACK-HAWKS-IN-SOMALIA-Black-Hawk-Down>

Media Stream



UH-60Q Black Hawk on Patrol

UH-60Q photo, courtesy American Federation of Scientists (FAS).

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/UH-60Q-Black-Hawk-on-Patrol>



Black Hawk over New York City after September 11

Photo, Library of Congress.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Black-Hawk-over-New-York-City-after-September-11>