
Editorial

Editorial – Somalia – 30 years on

On 9 December 1992, United States (US) Marines, under the command of Lieutenant General Robert Johnston, landed on the coast of Somalia as part of Operation Restore Hope.¹ General Charles Krulak, in his description of the 'three block war', captured some of the complexity of operations in Somalia, including the need to adjust rapidly from humanitarian assistance to either peacekeeping or traditional warfighting, with tactical decisions taken at the lowest unit levels.² The initial decision to send troops to Somalia followed a request from the UN Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for the US to lead a United Task Force (UNITAF) to provide humanitarian relief.³ Twenty-six nations formed part of UNITAF, including a 1,000 person contingent from Australia's 1RAR. From an operational viewpoint, the initial humanitarian operations were successful, with the UN and other relief organisations able to deliver sufficient food supplies across southern Somalia, and major reductions in starvation and disease deaths. Dr Darrell Duncan provides an excellent summary of the challenges faced by Australian military health personnel at the time.⁵ Unfortunately, the follow-on

UN Operations in Somalia (UNOSOM II) mission was less successful and was withdrawn in March 1995. Looking back after 30 years, the ADF and its medical personnel successfully conducted its humanitarian role despite the challenges of operating in, what today would be called, a 'hybrid warfare' situation.

Our third issue of 2024 contains a range of articles on diverse topics spanning physical training, mental health, health monitoring, military operational preparations, and military health history. We continue to attract a good range of articles, including from overseas. Other military and veterans' health articles, however, are always very welcome, and we would encourage all our readers to consider writing on their areas of military or veterans' health interest. We would particularly welcome papers based on presentations for the 2024 ICMM conference in Brisbane, but welcome any articles across the broader spectrum of military health.

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References

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2. Charles C. Krulak, "The strategic corporal: Leadership in the three block war," *Marine Corps Gazette* 83 (1999): 20.
3. Mats Berdal, "Lessons not learned: The use of force in 'peace operations' in the 1990s," *International Peacekeeping* 7, no. 4 (2000): 59.
4. Breen, Bob. *Australian Force Somalia: 1992-1993*. Canberra: Big Sky Publishing, 2021.
5. Duncan, Darrell J. "Military medical practice in Somalia." *Medical Journal of Australia* 159, no. 11-12 (1993): 739-744.