

Mogadishu assignment



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Running head: History Essay UNCLASSIFIED History Essay on Operation Gothic Serpent Abstract Operation Gothic Serpent in Oct 1993 in Mogadishu, Somalia has been labeled one of the bloodiest firefights for United States troops. It has also arguably been remembered as one of the U. S. military's blunders. Although the majority of Americans were disgusted and outraged by the failed operation, it can be used as a tool to study the vital role of NCOs and force readiness. History Essay on Operation Gothic Serpent One of the most widely debated issues in American politics is what specific role the United States should take in world crises.

Some would argue that it is the US's responsibility to promote and defend freedom, human rights, and democracy. Others disagree and take the opinion that the US should not impose its values on other nations or get involved in civil wars or other disputes. Despite one's political opinion, it is necessary for the military to be adequately prepared to engage in combat. Readiness for any mission should include timely and accurate intelligence reports, well-trained and well-armed troops, and competent leadership.

Examining Operation Gothic Serpent, it becomes evident that several of these prerequisites were lacking and contributed to the operation's bloody outcome. In 1992, President Bush authorized US troops to deploy to Somalia to assist in Operation Restore Hope. Operation Restore Hope was a United Nations operation designed to restore order in a nation that had been torn by civil war and brutal warlords. An already explosive environment turned from bad to worse when 24 Pakistani UN troops were killed in mid-1993. Bill Clinton had recently taken office and in response to a UN resolution he deployed a special task force to Somalia.

Under supervision of the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), Operation Gothic Serpent was launched headed up by Maj. General William F. Garrison. Task Force Ranger included one company of Rangers from Bravo Company, 3rd Battalion of the 75th Ranger Regiment, Delta Force, and personnel from the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment with MH-60 Black Hawks and MH-6 Little Birds. The goal was to arrest two of Mohamed Farrah Aidid's top lieutenants. Aidid was the current warlord responsible for countless deaths of fellow Somalis and numerous attacks on UN troops.

After several no-go's the codeword "Irene" was given and Task Force Ranger embarked on their mission. Although only estimated to last an hour, a new day's sun arose to find 18 Americans dead, 73 Americans wounded, and 5 Black Hawks down. Task Force Ranger boasted some of the most elite and lethal personnel in the world. However, operation planner greatly underestimated their enemy. Much of the troops' training involved covert, nighttime missions. Operation Gothic Serpent took place in broad daylight with thousands of Somalis watching the helicopters and troops.

A night attack would have given the US distinct advantages with night-vision technology. Unfortunately, no one foresaw that the mission would continue throughout the night when night-vision equipment could have been advantageous. Many of the participants agree that the use Abrams tanks and Bradley's most probably would have changed the final outcome. Had there not been egotism at work, troops may have deployed with sufficient supplies, like water. However, they did not foresee that an hour-long mission would have turned into an overnight bloodbath. High-tech equipment proved to be ineffective against low-tech opponents.

Aidid employed the use of low power walkie-talkies and transmitters that could not be intercepted by the CIA. The weaponry and persistence of the Somali militia and citizens was underestimated. Ground convoys were delayed because of rocks and burning tires placed in their route. The Somalis effectively employed guerilla warfare to combat the better trained and better equipped US troops. The Battle of the Black Sea, as it is also called, could have been less deadly for troops had there been a better understanding of the local citizens. Mogadishu was a city in practical ruins from years of civil war.

Infrastructure was badly damaged or totally destroyed. Despite living in deplorable conditions, the Somalis fought unpredictably hard to fight off UN and US forces. The majority of the soldiers, albeit very well trained, were very young with little real world experience. Eager to quickly neutralize the enemy and secure the targets, several contingencies were overlooked. Egotism between two very elite forces caused rifts among troops as well. Ground convoys could not reach the downed helicopters. Intelligence sources also greatly underestimated the type and amount of weaponry.

Others believed that they would encounter less hostile Somalis that would be more sympathetic to the mission of the UN and US. Forces encountered on the ground fought with veracity. It is arguable that the true nature of the operation from a humanitarian mission to a capture mission made certain resources unavailable to the troops. Furthermore, planners should have taken advantages of available technology and avoided a daytime mission. As in any battle in history, enlisted personnel play a vital role. NCOs are an

integral part in all militaries. By virtue of their rank and assignment, NCOs primary responsibility is training.

Secondary to training, responsibilities include maintaining discipline, protecting assets, ensuring welfare, and accomplishing the mission. All of these important elements are visible in the NCOs involved in Operation Gothic Serpent. Experienced and learned NCOs primarily trained the troops. This expertise helped prevent more casualties. Numerous accounts of heroism and bravery are recalled on the part of NCOs. Medics, snipers, Rangers, gunners, and other NCOs distinguished themselves as true patriots and heroes in battle. Operation Gothic Serpent is ultimately considered to be a success since the targets were captured.

The US casualties and losses were minimal compared to the estimated hundreds of Somali casualties. The mission was manned with very well trained and highly lethal forces. The equipment and aircraft were sufficient for the anticipated battle. The UN and the US gave full support to Operation Gothic Serpent. Intelligence was gathered and analyzed by a NIST, personnel from DIA, NSA, NIMA, and the CIA. The NIST was employed during this and several other missions as a result of intelligence bottlenecks during Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Intel is esigned to flow through a NIST more efficiently to all involved parties during a mission or crisis. The NIST has more widely available resources and capabilities than a Joint Task Force (JTF). There are several reasons for the devastating outcome of the 3 October raid: mission objectives were not fully supported by the political leadership, such as disapproving the request for armor; an inadequate intelligence gathering system; a lack of coordination between TFR, the QRF

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and UN forces; and military leadership decisions that limited the effectiveness of TFR, such as the tactics employed and not using all available firepower.

The events of Operation Gothic Serpent took their toll on the UN, Somalia, and the United States. The tragedy opened many naive Americans' eyes to the plight of certain other nations and how easily they could be misled. A simple humanitarian mission (Operation Restore Hope) quickly turned into Operation Gothic Serpent and the loss of American lives. Americans watched intently as news of hostages was received and horrors of mutilated bodies were relayed. The dead and wounded were not the only casualties of Operation Gothic Serpent.

There was a loss of trust and innocence in the American public. While Operation Gothic Serpent is considered a success because the targets were captured, it can still be considered to be a blunder. Multiple casualties, asset loss, and unfavorable public opinion mark the pages of history referencing those relatively few fateful hours in October 1993. None of the survivors and families of the fallen can erase the horrors witnessed in Mogadishu. Given the classification of the nature and training many of the participants undergo widespread academic studies and arguments are not feasible.

Many of the official details of the operation remain classified and scholars must rely mostly on firsthand accounts. However, soldiers and academics can use the lessons learned from this battle as a valuable asset in planning and in the Military Decision Making Process (MDMP) in the future. By knowing the history of the enemy and using current intelligence, our military can and

will achieve success in future battles. References Black Hawk Down. 1997. Philly. com. Retrieved 2 February 2009. . Bowden, M. Black Hawk Down. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999. Newsday. 5 December 1993. NomadNet. Retrieved 2 February 2009. .