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EASTERN EXIT

Rescue “. . . From the Sea”

Gary J. Ohls

Throughout the decade of the 1990s, the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps spent considerable time and energy attempting to define their roles in a new security environment created by the end of the Cold War. The decline of Soviet power, accentuated by large cutbacks in military spending and a withdrawal from Central and Eastern Europe, left the United States without a peer competitor—politically, diplomatically, or militarily—on the world scene.¹ As ideas and concepts churned throughout the Department of Defense, the Navy and Marine Corps issued a series of strategic and operational concept papers that defined the new security environment along with the roles and missions of the sea services. The Department of the Navy issued the most relevant of these documents during the first half of the 1990s.

Perhaps the most important paper to address post–Cold War security concerns was the September 1992 document entitled “. . . From the Sea: Preparing the Naval Service for the 21st Century.” This concept paper clearly identified a new direction for the naval services and defined a combined vision for the Navy and Marine Corps.² Unlike some earlier efforts, “. . . From the Sea” became widely influential within the naval services and throughout the Department of Defense.³

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Among other things, it expressed the expeditionary nature of the post–Cold War mission for both the Navy and Marine Corps while capturing the strategic temper of the time. It also reiterated the uncertainty that existed within the operational environment as leaders attempted to recalibrate their thinking.⁴ But if uncertainty existed

at the operational and strategic levels in the minds of some, “. . . From the Sea” clarified the direction for the sea services during that period and for the near-term future. It unequivocally directed the Navy and Marine Corps team to provide the nation with “Naval Expeditionary Forces—Shaped for Joint Operations—Operating Forward from the Sea—Tailored for National Needs.” Its strategic message emphasized the shift “away from open-ocean warfighting *on* the sea toward joint operations *from* the sea.”⁵ The word “from” constituted the key term in this new naval concept statement and thereby elevated the role of the U.S. Marine Corps within the larger naval mission of the time.⁶ Yet even as naval thinkers codified in their policy statements the concepts of littoral-focused expeditionary warfare and sea-based forward presence, the Navy and Marine Corps embodied these concepts through numerous incursions in Somalia, on the Horn of Africa.⁷

Among other things, “. . . From the Sea” emphasized the importance of unobtrusive forward presence—as opposed to the forward defense concept of the Cold War—and the flexibility of sea-based forces. That meant that naval expeditionary forces could not only come from the sea and return to the sea but also be sustained from the sea. This approach offers policy flexibility, because sea-based expeditionary forces can project either power or assistance ashore yet do not encroach on the sovereignty of nations while at sea.⁸ Once ashore, naval expeditionary forces present a relatively small “footprint,” because their support is based at sea, thereby reducing exposure, vulnerability, and host-nation resentment.⁹ By concentrating on the littoral regions of the world and recognizing the importance of power projection and maneuver from the sea, “. . . From the Sea” reinforced the importance of the Navy and Marine Corps team as an integrated element of sea power.¹⁰

In January 1996, the Marine Corps issued a document that augmented “. . . From the Sea”; it was entitled “Operational Maneuver from the Sea,” or, as it became known, simply OMFTS. Although the paper was published after the last American incursion in Somalia, its ideas and concepts expressed were greatly influenced by those operations as well as other actions occurring in the early 1990s.¹¹ Many officers within the Navy and Marine Corps contributed to the development of these various concepts, but one of the earliest inputs to OMFTS resulted from the experiences of Major General Harry W. Jenkins, Jr., during Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM and in the evacuation of the American embassy in Mogadishu, Somalia—Operation EASTERN EXIT. In a 1991 memorandum to the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Jenkins emphasized that future operations—either combat or humanitarian—should involve very rapid, long-range insertions at points along the coastline where gaps in coastal defenses would permit the avoidance of enemy strength. Speed of maneuver and

flexibility in the location of the launching point (that is, distance from the shoreline) constituted key elements of Jenkins's precepts. Although this approach would ultimately require development of new equipment, it also involved a new application of existing systems and a change in the mind-sets of leaders. He suggested the concept be named “Maneuver from the Sea,” or perhaps “Maneuver War from the Sea.”¹² Five years later, the Commandant published the OMFTS concept paper, which included all of Jenkins's ideas. The concepts of “. . . From the Sea” and OMFTS are clearly demonstrated in the series of incursions into Somalia early in the last decade of the twentieth century. The first of those events—known as Operation EASTERN EXIT—proved to be as dramatic as it was proficient.

During December 1990 the eyes of the world and the attention of its leaders focused on the Persian Gulf and Arabian Peninsula. For months, the United States had been building a strong naval and military presence throughout the region in response to Saddam Hussein's 2 August 1990 attack upon and occupation of Kuwait. Under the leadership of vice admirals Henry H. Mauz, Jr., and Stanley R. Arthur, NAVCENT (that is, the naval component of U.S. Central Command) had created a force in excess of a hundred ships, the largest American fleet assembled since World War II.¹³ The buildup had begun under Admiral Mauz and continued with Arthur, who assumed command of NAVCENT just six weeks before the 15 January 1991 deadline for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. Despite that cutoff date, the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), Admiral Frank Kelso II, did not consider war to liberate Kuwait as imminent and chose to implement the already-planned change of command at NAVCENT on 1 December 1990. General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, commander in chief of Central Command, considered Arthur one of the most aggressive admirals he knew and interposed no objection. Additionally, Arthur had considerable experience within this operational area, having created the post of NAVCENT back in 1983.¹⁴

When Arthur took command of NAVCENT in December 1990, Rear Admiral John B. “Bat” LaPlante commanded its amphibious element, which would ultimately consist of thirty-one ships, loaded with two Marine expeditionary brigades (MEBs) and one special-operations-capable Marine expeditionary unit (MEU [SOC])—roughly seventeen thousand Marines. LaPlante's Marine counterpart, Major General Harry W. Jenkins, Jr., commanded both the 4th MEB and, as senior Marine officer afloat, the overall Marine landing force, which ultimately included 5th MEB and 13th MEU (SOC).¹⁵ In the language of doctrine, LaPlante served as Commander, Amphibious Task Force (CATF), and Jenkins as Commander, Landing Force (CLF).¹⁶ (The Marine element afloat under Jenkins's command should not be confused with the I Marine Expeditionary Force—I MEF, pronounced

“One MEF”—ashore, under Lieutenant General Walter E. Boomer; it had a different mission and reporting structure.)¹⁷ The primary role of LaPlante as Commander, Task Force (CTF) 156, the amphibious task force, and Jenkins as CTF 158, commanding the embarked Marines, involved preparing for an amphibious assault against Iraqi positions on the Kuwaiti coastline in the upcoming Operation DESERT STORM. This required planning and operational rehearsals, the capstone event being a major landing exercise in Oman during late January 1991, designated SEA SOLDIER IV. This rehearsal included the entire force under LaPlante and Jenkins, and it would constitute the largest amphibious landing since Exercise STEEL PIKE in October 1964.¹⁸

Schwarzkopf often impressed on Arthur the importance of convincing Iraqi commanders that an amphibious landing would be part of any future war for Kuwait.¹⁹ Although the threatened landing was intended primarily as a deception, LaPlante and Jenkins needed to prepare for an actual assault landing should the course of war so dictate. With proper training, including large-scale rehearsals, the amphibious force would be capable of both deception and combat.²⁰ The importance of this exercise, coupled with firm arrangements coordinated through Omani and U.S. State Department representatives, caused both Arthur and LaPlante to consider the exercise dates for SEA SOLDIER IV as fixed and definite. They also believed that the entire amphibious force must participate in the landing, to achieve NAVCENT training objectives.²¹ The diversion of ships or Marines for any cause—no matter how important—would disrupt their planning and degrade combat readiness. This issue would influence the thinking of Arthur and LaPlante when conditions within Somalia necessitated an American rescue mission in the days just preceding DESERT STORM.²²

As events eventually played out, LaPlante and Jenkins did not conduct an amphibious landing during DESERT STORM. But as a deception, their operations constituted the most successful undertaking since the Second World War.²³ The major reasons for its success include the degree to which the Navy and Marine Corps prepared for the landing, especially the SEA SOLDIER IV rehearsal. Leaders at Central Command also provided the American news media opportunities to observe and report on the amphibious preparations. The film footage taken during their visits to the fleet showed up on television newscasts throughout the period leading up to the DESERT STORM ground attack. The fact that only the highest levels of command knew the amphibious landing was actually a ruse contributed as well. Even Jenkins—the senior Marine officer afloat—was not informed, although he had suspicions for various reasons, including the constant press coverage. The deception tied down five or six divisions (depending on the time frame) along the coast of Kuwait and drew an Iraqi reaction every time LaPlante and Jenkins made a move in the Persian Gulf.²⁴ The key commanders

believed that the hard training by the amphibious force during Operation DESERT SHIELD—capped by SEA SOLDIER IV—established the credibility that fooled Iraqi leaders.²⁵

Amphibious Squadron 6 (PHIBRON 6), commanded by Captain Alan B. Moser, had been among the first naval forces to sail to the Arabian Sea after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Moser's squadron consisted of five ships loaded with some 2,100 Marines from units of Jenkins's 4th MEB. By January 1991 they had been at sea over four months, conducting training and preparing for the looming battle with Iraq. Prior to deploying for DESERT SHIELD, Moser's squadron had spent only a few weeks in port at Norfolk, Virginia, following a routine Mediterranean deployment.²⁶ PHIBRON 6 was typical of the Navy and Marine forces that deployed for DESERT SHIELD, in that its elements responded to the crisis on very short notice and in various stages of training.²⁷ But during their time at sea the sailors and Marines of the amphibious task force conducted a series of training exercises, including IMMINENT THUNDER and SEA SOLDIER I–III, and achieved a high level of preparedness.²⁸ Nevertheless, they urgently needed the training of SEA SOLDIER IV to ensure their ability to conduct a large-scale landing if required.²⁹ SEA SOLDIER IV was particularly critical because Jenkins's landing force consisted of three distinct elements (4th MEB, 5th MEB, and 13th MEU [SOC]) that did not have a common higher headquarters. It amounted to a command roughly the size of a small Marine expeditionary force but without a MEF headquarters to structure and direct it.³⁰ Therefore, when LaPlante and Moser received the warning order to prepare for an amphibious evacuation of the U.S. embassy in Mogadishu, their immediate concern involved the new operation's impact on this critical exercise and subsequent combat landings should such action become necessary during the impending war with Iraq.³¹

On 1 January 1991, as LaPlante increased the tempo of war preparation, NAVCENT received an alert message indicating that civil war and internal clan conflict in Somalia might endanger U.S. citizens and require a military response.³² This warning did not surprise Arthur, who had been monitoring message traffic from Somalia and had noticed in it an increasing sense of urgency.³³ The following day, Ambassador James K. Bishop in Mogadishu requested military assistance to evacuate Americans from the U.S. embassy there due to the chaotic violence occurring throughout the city.³⁴ The Pentagon immediately directed Central Command to conduct a noncombatant evacuation operation (NEO) to rescue American citizens from Somalia.³⁵ Arthur tasked LaPlante with planning the NEO and proposing a contingency task force to execute the mission. LaPlante summoned Moser to a meeting on his flagship, the amphibious assault ship USS *Nassau* (LHA 4), then in port at Dubai. Having limited knowledge of conditions “on the ground” in Mogadishu, the two commanders envisioned a

force capable of performing missions across the entire range of amphibious operations, including both surface and air actions. (Only later in the planning process did it become obvious that a surface evacuation across the beach would not be practicable.) In addition to identifying the necessary amphibious ships and Marines for the mission, they proposed the assignment of two destroyers, which could provide fire support and electronic warfare capability, should that become necessary.³⁶

Despite the irregular nature of the fighting in Mogadishu, amphibious commanders were seriously concerned that sophisticated weapons systems might be present, particularly within the government faction. During much of the 1970s Somalia had been a Cold War ally of the Soviet Union and had received both modern weapons and advisers.³⁷ That relationship had soured and the Soviets had eventually withdrawn their support, but American commanders needed to consider the possibility that Cold War weapons—especially surface-to-air missiles and electronic warfare equipment—remained in Somali hands and could threaten their rescue mission.³⁸ LaPlante therefore recommended a seven-ship response force—four amphibious ships, two destroyer escorts, and one oiler—to conduct the operation, under Moser's command.³⁹

Concurrent with LaPlante's planning, Jenkins considered issues relating to the landing force that would conduct the operation on the ground. He tasked Colonel James J. Doyle, Jr., the commander of Brigade Service Support Group 4, then located on the amphibious dock transport USS *Trenton* (LPD 14), to serve as commander of the mission to Mogadishu. Jenkins instructed Doyle to create a special-purpose command element—designated 4th MEB, Detachment 1—aboard the amphibious assault ship (and helicopter carrier) USS *Guam* (LPH 9) to plan the operation and exercise command and control during its execution. Doyle relocated from *Trenton* to *Guam*, taking several key members of his Brigade Service Support Group 4 staff, which he integrated with officers from various headquarters elements to create an even more experienced, professional, and eager group.⁴⁰ Equally important, *Guam*'s commanding officer, Captain Charles R. Saffell, Jr., and the Marine commander of troops aboard *Guam*, Lieutenant Colonel Robert P. McAleer, along with their staffs, began planning for the operation even before the arrival of Doyle and Moser. Once the two commanders arrived on *Guam* with their own skeleton staffs, they could take advantage of work already advanced. The staff planning and subsequent execution thus amounted to a collaborative effort among Navy and Marine officers who knew their jobs, knew their doctrine and procedures, and in many cases knew each other personally.⁴¹

Arthur recognized the importance of rescuing Americans in Somalia but did not want to send seven ships to do the job. He viewed the action as strictly an



USS *Trenton* (LPD 14) (U.S. Navy)

extraction operation, to get people out of and away from Mogadishu. There would be no ongoing operation ashore in Somalia or afloat in the Indian Ocean. At least, Arthur hoped to limit the mission to that role, because he needed all his ships for DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM—including the critical SEA SOLDIER IV workup. Once he sent ships out of the operational area, Arthur and his commanders knew, getting them back could be a problem. For example, the evacuees coming out

of Mogadishu would require transfer to a safe port. Could he bring them back to Oman, or would he have to send his ships to other locations—such as Mombasa, Kenya, or the island of Diego Garcia—even farther from the scene of action? Additionally, commanders throughout the fleet remembered the 1990 evacuation



USS *Guam* (LPD 9) (U.S. Navy)

of Americans in Liberia, Operation SHARP EDGE, which had lasted five months and ultimately involved four ships and some 2,100 Marines. Not wanting to degrade combat readiness in the Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf any more than absolutely necessary, Arthur decided that a two-ship

amphibious task force with the right mix of helicopters and Marines could accomplish the mission in Somalia.⁴² Two of the amphibious ships at anchorage near Masirah, Oman—*Guam* and *Trenton*—not only had the necessary configuration but also were located nearest to the Horn of Africa.⁴³ LaPlante assigned these two ships to conduct the operation and sent Moser—whom he held in high esteem and hated to lose—to act as commodore of the amphibious task force.⁴⁴

The need for this rescue mission to Somalia had resulted from the breakdown of governmental control and subsequent social strife throughout that nation, especially in the capital city of Mogadishu.⁴⁵ By 1989, twenty years of dictatorial rule under President Mahammad Siad Barre had produced three substantial

clan-based rebel factions, including the Somali National Movement (SNM), active in northern Somalia; the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM), primarily in the south; and the United Somali Congress (USC), focused in Mogadishu and central Somalia.⁴⁶ Over the next two years, political turmoil became increasingly fierce, spawning clan warfare and rampant criminal activity. As Siad Barre lost grip on power in Somalia, the rebel elements further broke down into subclan conflict, increasing the bloodshed and undercutting efforts at unification.⁴⁷ In early December 1990, conditions had deteriorated to the point that Ambassador Bishop evacuated nonessential embassy personnel and called on all American citizens to leave the country. He even sent his wife and daughter out of Somalia, to underscore the seriousness of the situation and encourage others to depart.⁴⁸ Most foreign missions in Mogadishu took similar actions as the fighting increased and social disintegration worsened. Although not specifically targeted by any Somali faction, the U.S. embassy and its staff often became the victims of gunfire and random acts of violence.⁴⁹

After meeting with the Somali president and prime minister in the closing days of December, Bishop concluded that the government had neither a plan nor the ability to control the growing crisis. As carnage and lawlessness spread, the need to evacuate remaining Americans increased, while the ability to do so decreased. The situation constituted the kind of “chaos in the littorals” that the OMFTS concept paper would later decry as a war of “all against all.”⁵⁰ In response, Bishop moved Americans into relatively secure areas in and around the embassy, while Italian officials made a fruitless effort to arrange a cease-fire among the factions. With the failure of this effort, the American ambassador realized his options were narrowing, and on 2 January he requested military assistance to evacuate the U.S. embassy. On the following day Bishop perceived that conditions were so bad that only a helicopter-borne evacuation had any chance of rescuing the remaining Americans from Mogadishu.⁵¹ His urgent request for help received immediate attention in Washington and set in motion the planning and execution of Operation EASTERN EXIT, which came to be considered by many a model for this type of action.⁵²

In response to the Pentagon’s execution order for EASTERN EXIT, officers at Central Command deployed two C-130 and one AC-130 aircraft to Kenya and ordered *Guam* and *Trenton* to set sail toward Mogadishu. In reality, commanders at Central Command had already initiated these actions, in anticipation of orders from the National Command Authority. After meeting with LaPlante aboard *Nassau*, Moser took five members of his squadron staff and four officers from Tactical Air Control Squadron 12 to Masirah in a P-3 Orion and then helicoptered aboard *Guam*.⁵³ Doyle had already arrived, and the two commanders collocated their operations center in the ship’s Supporting Arms

Control Center. Although this arrangement appears somewhat ad hoc, creating special-purpose organizations for various expeditionary actions is normal for Marine and naval officers of the amphibious service.⁵⁴ The officers assembling on *Guam* to plan and execute this rescue mission had considerable experience in this type of operation, and many had worked together before.⁵⁵ The planning began immediately upon receipt of the warning order and continued after the two ships departed Masirah just before midnight on 2 January 1991.⁵⁶

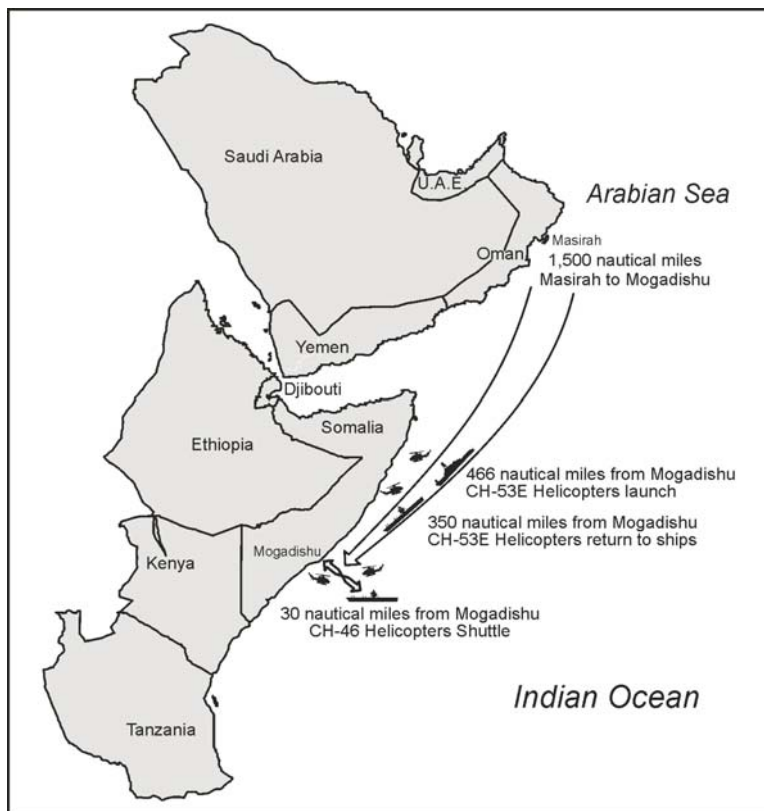
With the amphibious force in motion, officers at Central Command and NAVCENT continued to consider alternative methods for conducting the evacuation. In fact, various possibilities had been under consideration at all levels of command from the beginning of the crisis, and it had not yet become clear that only one option remained viable. Initially, the preferred course of action involved sending aircraft with security detachments on board into the Mogadishu airport and flying American evacuees out of the country. Several other foreign missions had done exactly that during the last few days of December.⁵⁷ But this required a permissive environment, and leaders at Central Command came to realize from Bishop's messages that such conditions no longer existed.⁵⁸ The embassy could not even communicate with the Mogadishu airport to obtain permission for landing evacuation aircraft, because the telephone lines were all down. More important, the airport was nearly two miles from the U.S. embassy, and Bishop did not believe Americans could move safely on the city streets, due to the extreme violence. Central Command also considered the use of special operations forces, going so far as to direct that six MH-53 Pave Low helicopters with tanker support be prepared to conduct the evacuation.⁵⁹ This option never progressed beyond the initial concept, because the Pave Low helicopters were preparing for the imminent launching of DESERT STORM.⁶⁰ Additionally, the special operations forces were heavily committed along the Iraqi border and in the western desert looking for Scud missiles.⁶¹ It now became apparent that only an amphibious evacuation by ship-based helicopters remained viable and offered a prospect for success regardless of the situation on the ground.⁶²

By 4 January, conditions had deteriorated so much that Bishop requested two platoons of paratroopers be dropped to protect Americans until the amphibious task force could arrive.⁶³ Colonel Doyle and other commanders considered it a bad idea, because the space available for a drop zone was so small that paratroopers might be scattered outside the embassy. Such an operation also increased the number of people requiring evacuation.⁶⁴ More important, by the time Bishop made his request events had outpaced its rationale: Moser's task force was nearing a position to launch its helicopters, sooner than Bishop had expected, and the rescue team would likely arrive before paratroops could be

delivered.⁶⁵ Fortunately for all concerned, Schwarzkopf refused to authorize the paratroop drop.⁶⁶

When *Guam* and *Trenton* originally received orders to sail, they were located in the northern Arabian Sea off the coast of Masirah, Oman, approximately 1,500 miles from Mogadishu. *Guam* had a top speed of twenty-four knots, whereas *Trenton* could make about eighteen knots maximum. There was no requirement to keep the ships together, and initially *Guam* steamed at near maximum speed, outpacing *Trenton*. Saffell received orders to slow to a more fuel-efficient speed, with which he complied. But as the situation in Mogadishu became clear, the ship resumed its initial speed. Neither Moser nor Saffell was concerned about fuel usage, because they had plenty on board and could replenish in Mombasa if necessary.⁶⁷ In any case, it had become essential that the ships close the distance to Somalia as fast as possible and that imperative trumped fuel economy.

Planning and conducting operations had become second nature to Moser, Doyle, their staffs, the officers of the ships, and the embarked Marines. In addition, existing doctrine, standing operating procedures, and training in rapid planning techniques greatly facilitated their effort and ensured the prompt issuance of well conceived orders.⁶⁸ The question of when to launch the rescue force



remained under discussion, but Bishop's anxious messages forced the issue into the forefront. While Moser and Doyle prepared for the evacuation in Mogadishu, LaPlante and Jenkins—exhibiting high confidence in their subordinates—monitored events from *Nassau* and continued preparation for SEA SOLDIER IV, scheduled to begin in Oman on 19 January 1991.⁶⁹

In the early morning hours of 5 January 1991, two Marine Corps CH-53E Super Stallion helicopters lifted a small

amphibious force from *Guam*'s deck and headed for Mogadishu, 466 miles to the southwest.⁷⁰ It was now clearer than ever that only the helicopter-borne amphibious option offered any hope for saving the Americans in time.⁷¹ The CH-53Es, because they were designed to conduct in-flight refueling, had a long-range insertion capability; they remain today the only U.S. heavy-lift helicopters that can fly into an uncertain environment at such a long distance.⁷² Although assigned to *Trenton*, these two helicopters cross-decked to *Guam* to load the evacuation force and then launch for Mogadishu.⁷³ The Super Stallions carried a sixty-man force consisting of forty-seven Marines from 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines (an element of Jenkins's 4th MEB), commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Robert P. McAleer, and four Marines from Doyle's headquarters elements. It also included a nine-man Sea-Air-Land (SEAL) team under Commander Stephen R. Louma, USN.⁷⁴ McAleer's 1st Battalion had been the helicopter-borne assault element of Regimental Landing Team 2 (RLT-2), composed primarily of the 2nd Marine Regiment.⁷⁵ As such, McAleer's Marines had become very proficient in helicopter operations from the many exercises and rehearsals conducted at sea. Additionally, their predeployment training at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, had included noncombatant evacuation exercises.⁷⁶

Doyle ordered McAleer to accompany his Marines into Mogadishu, while he remained at sea, where he could keep close contact with Moser and have better communications.⁷⁷ In addition to assigning McAleer to command the Marines and SEALs under Louma, Doyle appointed Lieutenant Colonel Willard D. Oats as overall commander of the forward element.⁷⁸ Oats would be the senior officer on the ground in Mogadishu, working primarily with the ambassador after arriving at the embassy. Major William N. Saunders served as the logistician for the mission and specifically supervised the evacuation control center (ECC), which would process evacuees and prepare them for departure.

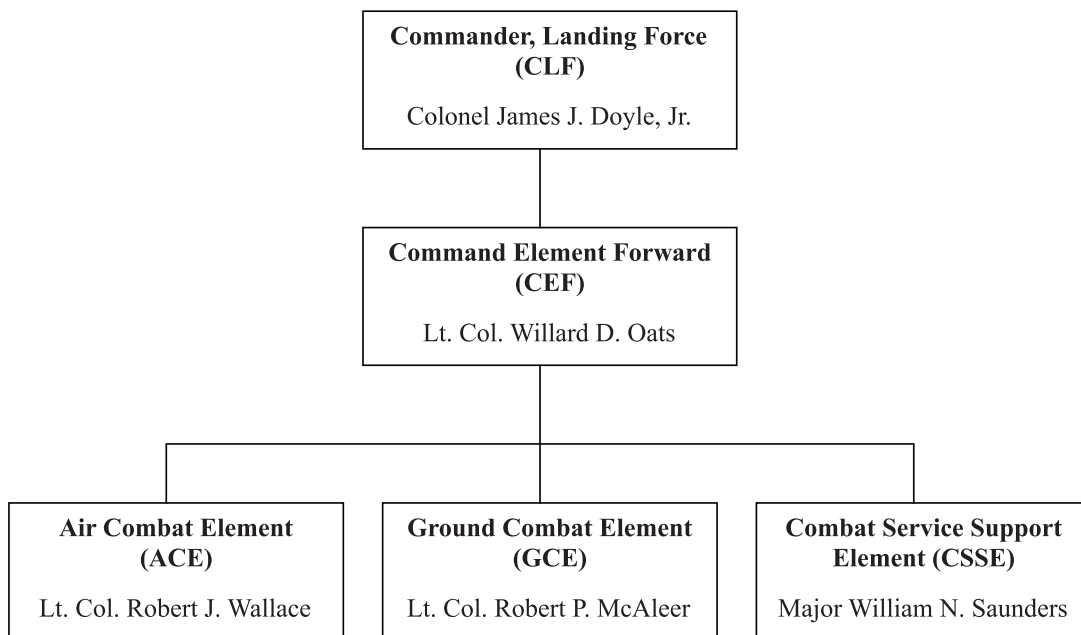
Sending two lieutenant colonels, one Navy commander (Louma accompanied the SEAL team), and a major in addition to the normal complement of officers and noncommissioned officers seems excessively top heavy. But Doyle considered this “an unconventional operation with potentially extraordinary consequences” and wanted a “few guys with gray hair” in the landing zone. Loss of American life in the embassy at Mogadishu would distract the nation as it approached the critical point of war in the Persian Gulf. Additionally, Doyle clearly remembered the 1979 Iranian hostage crisis and how it had constrained American action for 444 days. Either scenario could unhinge DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM planning, resulting in unthinkable consequences.⁷⁹

Essentially, Doyle organized the NEO team in a Marine air-ground task force structure, as illustrated in the figure below. In Doyle's organizational plan, Oats functioned as the senior officer ashore, although McAleer held the

same rank and commanded most of the Marines. Fortunately, command issues never became a problem, despite the large number of high-ranking officers ashore, because Oats and McAleer tended to be of one mind throughout the operation.⁸⁰ Additionally, Bishop clearly understood his role in the operation and remained firmly in control of events throughout.⁸¹ The ambassador had been involved in the evacuation at Monrovia, Liberia (Operation SHARP EDGE), a few months earlier and EASTERN EXIT clearly benefited from his experience.⁸²

While evaluating alternate courses of action, Moser and Doyle considered launching the helicopters directly from their initial positions in the northern Arabian Sea, some 1,500 miles from the target area. They again considered it when the ships reached a point 890 miles away, but ultimately, as noted above, they launched the aircraft from a distance of 466 nautical miles.⁸³ In addition to Bishop's distressed calls for help, a number of issues contributed to the decision to send the helicopters at this juncture, including in-flight refueling requirements, the availability of tanker support, the arrival time over Mogadishu, and the availability of AC-130 gunships to provide cover.⁸⁴ Anticipating the need for in-flight refueling, Arthur had earlier contacted U.S. Air Force representatives at Central Command and learned that they could not provide tanker support, due

FIGURE 3
DOYLE'S MAGTF STRUCTURE FOR ORGANIZING THE MOGADISHU NEO FORCE



Source: Doyle interview, 20 October 2008; Siegel, "Eastern Exit," pp.16, 18, 21.

to other commitments. He had then approached Major General Royal N. Moore, commanding general of the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, and arranged for Marine Corps KC-130 tankers to refuel the Super Stallions.⁸⁵ This proved challenging enough, as the 466-nautical-mile flight meant refueling twice, over open water at night, by pilots who had not recently practiced the procedure.⁸⁶ The first refueling would enable the helicopters to arrive at Mogadishu, and it occurred at a point that would allow the helicopters to return to *Guam* should the effort prove unsuccessful. The second refueling provided sufficient fuel for locating the embassy and ensuring that the outbound flight could clear the Somali coastline.⁸⁷

In the event, aerial refueling proved difficult, for a variety of reasons. The lack of night-vision capability in the KC-130 tankers (one pilot in each of the CH-53Es wore night-vision goggles) made it difficult for their crews to see the helicopters at the rendezvous point. It had been over a year since the helicopter pilots practiced refueling, not having anticipated any such requirement during DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM. They had even taken the refueling probes off their aircraft, making it necessary to reinstall them prior to takeoff. Fortunately, Captain Saffell was himself an aviator and was acutely attuned to the problems and risks of nighttime refueling over an open ocean.⁸⁸ He delayed the helicopter launch until he saw the KC-130s on radar and then tracked both groups to ensure a rendezvous.⁸⁹ One helicopter experienced a fuel leak while refueling, which the crew chief repaired in flight, but not before the Marines and SEALs received a good dousing of gas. It appears that the air crew had not only removed the probes but failed to service the equipment.⁹⁰ The second refueling, just fifty-three nautical miles from Mogadishu, went somewhat more smoothly and provided enough fuel to locate the embassy and depart from Mogadishu. Yet another refueling would be required during the flight back to *Guam*, which proved successful though problematic.⁹¹

Another source of problems during the flight to Mogadishu was navigation, because the Omega navigation system on the CH-53Es could not always acquire the three land-based signals it needed. The part of the Indian Ocean in which the task force operated had dead spaces, resulting in inconsistent fixes.⁹² As a result, the pilots relied on dead reckoning (based on preflight calculations), pathfinding support from the KC-130 refuelers, and positive control from the ships while within radar range.⁹³ When the Omega could obtain fixes, the pilots used them as backups.

Launching beyond 466 miles would have multiplied the problems faced by the pilots in conducting the long-range insertion due to the additional refueling requirements and navigational complications. Conversely, waiting for a closer departure point would very likely have proved disastrous for the embassy personnel, as local conditions continued to worsen. In retrospect, it seems that

Moser, Doyle, and the planners of EASTERN EXIT aboard *Guam* calculated the launch point just about right.⁹⁴

After receiving the last inbound refueling and a final fix on their position from the KC-130s, the helicopter pilots began their approach into the city. If navigating across part of the Indian Ocean had been difficult, locating the embassy proved equally vexing. The initial information available during the planning phase regarding the location and configuration of the compound proved to be out of date and inaccurate.⁹⁵ A Marine warrant officer who accompanied Doyle from *Trenton* had served on the Marine security guard detachment in Somalia several years earlier, and he pointed out that the embassy had moved inland from the position indicated on their maps and planning documents.⁹⁶ Updated coordinates and an aerial photograph were received later in the planning process and proved helpful in identifying the new embassy location. They also eliminated any residual consideration of landing over the beach with surface forces, because the Marines would likely have had to fight their way across Mogadishu, and American leaders wanted to avoid becoming involved in Somalia's civil war. Despite updated information, the embassy compound proved difficult to identify from the air, particularly at low altitude in the early morning light.⁹⁷ The pilots spent nearly twenty minutes flying over Mogadishu and eventually made a second approach from the sea before finding their objective.⁹⁸

As the Super Stallions arrived over the U.S. embassy at approximately 0620 in the morning of 5 January, the compound was receiving a large volume of gunfire, and some 150 Somalis with ladders had gathered at one of the embassy walls.⁹⁹ Flying low into the cantonment area, the helicopters scattered the assembled miscreants and landed within the embassy grounds.¹⁰⁰ The Marines disembarked and established a perimeter to defend the compound and protect subsequent evacuations.¹⁰¹ The SEAL team assumed responsibility for protecting the ambassador and reinforced the Marine security guard detachment (Marines permanently stationed at the embassy, as opposed to those arriving in helicopters) protecting the chancery building.¹⁰²

The two helicopters remained on the ground for approximately one hour, as an Air Force AC-130 gunship loitered overhead to gather intelligence and offer fire support if required. The Super Stallions took off for their return flight to *Guam*—now some 350 miles away—with sixty-one evacuees, including all non-official Americans in the compound; the ambassadors from Nigeria, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates; and the Omani chargé d'affaires.¹⁰³ The original plan called for the CH-53Es to return to *Guam* and bring a second echelon of Marines into the embassy; Oats believed he needed another forty-four Marines to ensure security and process the evacuees efficiently and effectively. But when the two CH-53E helicopters departed with the evacuees, it would be a one-way trip.

After another difficult refueling in route, the Sea Stallions landed on the deck of *Guam* just under eight hours after their initial departure from the ship. They would not return to Mogadishu with reinforcements but rather fly to *Trenton*, where their role in the mission ended.¹⁰⁴

Doyle did not perceive a direct threat against the evacuation force in Mogadishu and, in conjunction with Moser, chose not to dispatch additional Marines.¹⁰⁵ Sending in more troops implied a longer operation and increased the number of people needing evacuation from the embassy. Although it was a risky call, events once again bore out Doyle's judgment. Even had Doyle wanted to insert the additional Marines, he would not have been able to do so with the CH-53Es, because their crews were exhausted from the wearing flight in and out of Mogadishu and not yet capable of another demanding mission. With the Super Stallions back on *Trenton*, Marine CH-46 Sea Knight helicopters stationed on board *Guam* would carry out subsequent evacuations, once the ships brought them within range of the embassy.¹⁰⁶

Meanwhile, Marines and embassy employees in Mogadishu prepared for subsequent evacuations, although the shortage of staff to operate the ECC severely hindered the process. With conditions worsening in the city, security remained marginal despite the arrival of the Navy and Marine Corps team. There had not been enough Marines on the helicopters to process evacuees efficiently and provide adequate security as well.¹⁰⁷ This had motivated Oats to request the forty-four additional Marines. He did not want to weaken perimeter security by using McAleer's Marines in the ECC but eventually felt it necessary to do so. The final decision not to send more troops into Mogadishu forced Bishop, Oats, and the other hard-pressed Americans to complete their tasks with the personnel on hand.¹⁰⁸ Doyle realized that Oats's job was difficult, but absent a concerted effort to storm the embassy he felt another high-risk insertion flight could not be justified.¹⁰⁹

Conditions worsened throughout Mogadishu, and consular representatives from numerous nations sought refuge in and evacuation through the American embassy. Bishop at first required foreign nationals to make their own ways to the embassy, but when the Soviet ambassador declared that he and his remaining staff would require assistance, Bishop agreed to escort them with permanent embassy security personnel. To augment this force he contracted the Somali police, under a Major Sayed, who agreed to support the effort for a fee. The ambassador used a similar approach in escorting members of the British mission into the American embassy.¹¹⁰ On one occasion, a team of Marines, SEALs, and embassy security personnel ventured into Mogadishu in hardened vehicles to rescue twenty-two people from the Office of Military Cooperation and return them safely to the embassy grounds.¹¹¹ The twenty-two included Colonel David

Stanley, the chief of the office, along with the ambassador from Kenya and members of his family and staff.¹¹²

The understaffed ECC established by Saunders on the embassy grounds worked hard to identify and process evacuees under difficult circumstances. Since augmentation of the evacuation force had been denied, Oats utilized members of the embassy staff along with, as noted, some of McAleer's Marines to provide administrative help (checking identities, screening potential evacuees, creating manifests, etc.), as best they could. Although ultimately successful, the preparation of evacuees for movement out of Mogadishu fell far short of ideal, causing problems at the departure site and aboard the ships—particularly in identifying and accounting for authorized evacuees.¹¹³ As the Marines within the embassy struggled with their problems, the officers and crews of *Guam* and *Trenton* began addressing the needs of evacuees. This included establishing a medical triage station, arranging berthing for both genders, caring for children, protecting individual property, accounting for evacuees by nationality and status, and providing food and clothing, while at the same time supporting operations ashore.¹¹⁴

As night approached on 5 January, Marine CH-46 Sea Knight helicopters—flying in four waves of five aircraft each—commenced evacuation operation off the decks of *Guam*, now positioned approximately thirty miles at sea. To minimize the risk of hostile fire, all evacuation flights by the Sea Knight helicopters occurred at night, with the embassy compound darkened. The Marine pilots and infantrymen used night-vision devices.¹¹⁵ Even with such equipment flight operations at night in an uncertain environment can be very dangerous, but the Marines believed they had better control of these complications than they would have had over the hostile elements that freely operated during daylight.¹¹⁶ The evacuation started smoothly until Major Sayed, who had earlier assisted in the transportation of foreign consular personnel into the American embassy, suddenly arrived with two trucks full of soldiers. Carrying a radio and hand grenade, Sayed demanded that the evacuation cease immediately—his government had not approved the flights.¹¹⁷ Bishop and Oats refused to halt the operations, and the ambassador ultimately persuaded the Somali officer not to interfere.¹¹⁸ Bishop accomplished this through skillful negotiation, the help of several thousand dollars, and the keys to an embassy automobile of Sayed's choice. In the process, Bishop managed to take possession of the major's radio, to prevent him from calling antiaircraft fire on the departing helicopters.¹¹⁹

This incident created some confusion in the last evacuation waves, because Bishop insisted on remaining in the compound so as to be available to handle such problems through the end of the evacuation. He and his security team had been scheduled to depart in the third wave, but his decision to remain to the end

meant that only four helicopters on the third wave were full and departed as planned. The fifth helicopter remained on the ground until the arrival of the fourth wave. Having an extra helicopter in the final wave created confusion, causing inaccuracies in the serial manifests and the helicopter loading plan. That confusion in turn nearly resulted in a small communications team's missing the last flight out of Mogadishu (the crew chief on one of the Sea Knights spotted the Marines and placed them aboard his aircraft).¹²⁰ Ultimately, all personnel approved or designated for evacuation, including the entire NEO force, departed safely and arrived on board *Guam* or *Trenton*.¹²¹ As the last helicopter departed, a large mob entered the embassy grounds, looting and destroying everything in sight. Well before sunrise on 6 January 1991, the last Sea Knight set down on the deck of *Guam* and Ambassador Bishop declared the evacuation complete.¹²²

The final evacuation flight occurred without the support of the AC-130, because the gunship had detected a radar of the type associated with a Soviet-built SA-2 surface-to-air missile site tracking it and had moved off station. The presence of SA-2 missiles confirmed the commanders' concerns about the presence of sophisticated weapons in Somalia. The SA-2 posed a definite threat to the AC-130 aircraft, but Doyle had not been concerned for the CH-46 helicopters, because he believed they would fly too low to be tracked by its radars.¹²³

The amphibious evacuation in Mogadishu ultimately extracted 281 people, including sixty-one Americans, thirty-nine Soviet citizens, seventeen British citizens, twenty-six Germans, and various numbers from twenty-eight other nations.¹²⁴ This included twelve heads of diplomatic missions—eight ambassadors and four *chargés d'affaires*. Unfortunately, Bishop had determined that none of the many Somali foreign service nationals in the embassy compound could be evacuated, although they had remained loyal. Bishop did not even have enough cash to pay all their wages due. Though they faced an uncertain future, the Somalis accepted their fate, remained on their job to the end, and never attempted to rush the helicopters or create serious problems for the evacuation effort.¹²⁵

The influx of civilians on *Guam* and *Trenton* severely taxed their resources and ability to provide support, of course. But Saffell described the response of the sailors and Marines as “awesome,” noting that they gladly gave berthing space and personal items to ease the plight of the evacuees.¹²⁶ Additionally, the *Guam*'s medical staff treated one evacuee with an abdominal gunshot wound and another with a knife wound.¹²⁷ Also, the Sudanese ambassador's wife gave birth to a baby boy on board *Guam*. (In keeping with an old Navy tradition, the lad's name was engraved on the inside of the ship's bell.)¹²⁸

On 11 January *Trenton* and *Guam* off-loaded their passengers in Muscat, Oman, without fanfare and resumed their duties in support of DESERT SHIELD

and DESERT STORM. Bishop had wanted the evacuees transported to Mombasa, but Schwarzkopf ordered the ships back into the area of impending conflict in the Gulf of Oman.¹²⁹ Omani officials were at first reluctant to accept the refugees, but stellar work by the American ambassador in Oman persuaded them to do so. Before taking leave of the sailors and Marines, Ambassador Bishop praised their competence and professionalism, concluding his remarks by saying, “Few of us would have been alive today if we had been outside your reach. It was only due to your efforts that we made it.”¹³⁰

In many ways, EASTERN EXIT is a textbook example of how to conduct an amphibious evacuation. The Commandant of the Marine Corps at the time, General Alfred Gray, referred to it as a “very complex and somewhat dangerous mission.”¹³¹ Gray should know about complex and dangerous NEOs, since he played a prominent role in the evacuation of Saigon in April 1975.¹³² Although Gray also called the mission “flawless,” many problems arose throughout the action. But the professionalism of Marines and sailors overcame those obstacles with solutions sufficient to ensure success.¹³³ The operation demonstrated that the amphibious capability of the United States could respond to nearly any exigency virtually anywhere in the world, even when distracted by larger and more important missions, such as DESERT SHIELD and the upcoming DESERT STORM. Navy and Marine Corps leaders considered EASTERN EXIT a demonstration of the excellence of the sea services and an example of the value of amphibious capability within the expeditionary environment. The operation also demonstrated that modern amphibious actions depend as much on aviation assets—particularly helicopters—as on traditional surface landing vehicles. This is not surprising, considering that the U.S. Marine Corps pioneered the military use of helicopters for a variety of applications, including vertical assault during the Korean War.¹³⁴

As part of the complete revision of Marine Corps doctrine that occurred during the second half of the 1990s, General Charles C. Krulak, Commandant from 1995 to 1999, used EASTERN EXIT as a case study for understanding and implementing expeditionary concepts in the emerging new world order.¹³⁵ More important, EASTERN EXIT made clear that the professional Navy and Marine Corps team that had matured over several hundred years continued to provide American political and diplomatic leaders with a range of military options unknown anywhere else in the world, or at any other time in history.¹³⁶ The commitment of forces to EASTERN EXIT had no impact on the subsequent war with Iraq. After off-loading the evacuees in Oman, the entire task force returned to normal duty and fully participated in SEA SOLDIER IV, the important final workup for DESERT STORM.¹³⁷ As subsequent events showed, Schwarzkopf’s air and ground war

proved sufficient to defeat Saddam Hussein’s forces—with a little help from the amphibious feint of LaPlante and Jenkins. The ability to move seamlessly from DESERT SHIELD to EASTERN EXIT to SEA SOLDIER IV and on to DESERT STORM clearly illustrates the capabilities needed to implement the operational and strategic concepts espoused in “. . . From the Sea” and “Operational Maneuver from the Sea.”

EASTERN EXIT received little press coverage due to the larger events of DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM, yet many in the Department of Defense appreciated its significance. Not only did the Marine Corps include it as a case study in subsequent doctrinal publications, but the Navy also mentioned it in Naval Doctrine Publication 1, *Naval Warfare*.¹³⁸ Captain Moser assisted in the lessons-learned process by preparing an instructional seminar that became part of the curriculum at the Armed Forces Staff College, in Norfolk, Virginia.¹³⁹ Lieutenant Colonel McAleer also created a briefing, which he presented to the Landing Force Training Commands at the amphibious bases in Little Creek, Virginia, and Coronado, California.¹⁴⁰ More notably, he briefed the material to Captain Braden J. Phillips, Colonel Michael W. Hagee, and the 11th MEU (SOC) staff during their predeployment training at Camp Pendleton, California. As commanders of Amphibious Squadron 1 and 11th MEU (SOC), respectively, Phillips and Hagee led the next Navy and Marine Corps team to implement the precepts of “. . . From the Sea.” In August 1992, the United States returned to Somalia to assist in humanitarian relief during operation PROVIDE RELIEF—a precursor to Operation RESTORE HOPE. That September, the PHIBRON 1 and 11th MEU (SOC) team deployed to the Indian Ocean and returned to the Horn of Africa as the United States attempted to help a nation in crisis.¹⁴¹

After the American evacuation of its embassy in Mogadishu, conditions had continued to deteriorate in Somalia. To some extent, the large quantities of weapons and ammunition previously supplied by the Soviet Union and later by the United States fueled the fighting. As rebel factions gained ground against Siad Barre, they often captured armories and munitions supply centers with which to arm their forces and allies.¹⁴² By late January 1991—about two weeks after the evacuation and just as General Schwarzkopf began the air operations phase of DESERT STORM—forces under Mohamed Farah Aideed drove Siad Barre from Mogadishu and, by May 1992, into exile in Kenya and Nigeria. Although many factors contributed to the defeat of Siad Barre and the collapse of his rule, Aideed was largely responsible for the final victory. He not only drove Siad Barre out of Somalia but also defeated his three subsequent efforts to regain control. Aideed believed this success earned him the right to lead the nation, but other warlords disagreed. The clans could not unite to form a new government; warfare continued, and chaotic conditions persisted. The extreme violence

made food distribution difficult, creating critical shortages in many parts of Somalia. Reports fostered an impression of widespread starvation, causing the United Nations to request international intervention to alleviate suffering and restore order. It was for this reason that, a year and a half after EASTERN EXIT, American naval expeditionary forces would return to Somalia and once again apply the concepts of “. . . From the Sea.”¹⁴³

NOTES

1. *National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: White House, March 1990); *National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: White House, August 1991); Michael Klase, “The Rise and Fall of the ‘Rogue Doctrine’: The Pentagon’s Quest for a Post-Cold War Military Strategy,” *Middle East Report* (Fall 1998), pp. 12–15, 47.
2. U.S. Navy Dept., “. . . From the Sea: Preparing the Naval Service for the 21st Century” (Washington, D.C.: September 1992), signature page (unnumbered) reprinted in *U.S. Naval Strategy in the 1990s: Selected Documents*, ed. John B. Hattendorf, Newport Paper 27 (Newport, R.I.: Naval War College Press, 2006), pp. 87–99; Thomas P. M. Barnett, *The Pentagon’s New Map: War and Peace in the Twenty-first Century* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 2004), pp. 77–78.
3. Hattendorf, ed., *U.S. Naval Strategy in the 1990s*, pp. 14, 87–88.
4. The term “expeditionary” is subject to various interpretations, but for purposes of this article it “implies a mind set, a culture, and a commitment to forces that are designed to operate forward and to respond swiftly on short notice to crises in distant lands.” “Naval Expeditionary Forces provide unobtrusive forward presence, which may be intensified or withdrawn as required on short notice” (U.S. Navy Dept., “. . . From the Sea,” p. 5).
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 2–7.
6. E. T. O’Brien, “From the Sea—to Where?” (thesis paper, U.S. Marine Corps Command and Staff College, Quantico, Virginia, 1993), p. 6.
7. Commander in Chief, U.S. Atlantic Fleet to Chief of Naval Operations, *Draft CJCS Report on Roles, Missions and Functions of the Armed Forces of the United States*, 31 December 1992, folder 00 Subject filed, 3000–5000 Jan–Mar 1993, 5000 folder, Jan–Mar 1993, Naval Historical Center [hereafter NHC], Operational Archives, Navy Yard, Washington, D.C.
8. Norman E. Ehlert, “Naval Expeditionary Forces and Crisis Response,” in *Naval Forward Presence and the National Military Strategy*, ed. Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr., and Richard H. Shultz, Jr. (Annapolis, Md.: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 1993), p. 211–12.
9. Gary I. Wilson, Chris Yunker, and Franklin C. Spinney, “OMFTS: Innovation, Deep Maneuver, and Aviation,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (December 1997), p. 21.
10. U.S. Navy Dept., “. . . From the Sea,” pp. 5, 9–10.
11. Maj. Gen. Harry W. Jenkins, Jr., USMC (Ret.), interview with Gary J. Ohls, Chantilly, Virginia, 11 February 2008.
12. Maj. Gen. Henry W. Jenkins, Jr., to the Commandant of the Marine Corps, memorandum, 16 December 1991 (copy provided to the author by Major General Jenkins).
13. Adm. Stanley R. Arthur, USN (Ret.), interview with Gary J. Ohls, Newport, Rhode Island, 21 November 2007; Edward J. Marolda and Robert J. Schneller, Jr., *Shield and Sword: The United States Navy and the Persian Gulf War* (Washington, D.C.: NHC, 1998), pp. 52, 110, 325.
14. Arthur interview, 21 November 2007; Marolda and Schneller, *Shield and Sword*, pp. 16–17, 135–40, 366; Marvin Pokrant, *Desert Shield at Sea: What the Navy Really Did* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1999), pp. 169–71, 173–74; H. Norman Schwarzkopf

- and Peter Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero: General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, the Autobiography* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), p. 437.
15. The amphibious force ultimately consisted of Amphibious Group (PHIBGRU) 2 (thirteen ships), PHIBGRU 3 (thirteen ships), PHIBRON 5 (five ships), 4th MEB, 5th MEB, and 13th MEU (SOC), totaling thirty-one ships and some seventeen thousand Marines afloat. Jenkins interview, 11 February 2008; Vice Adm. John B. “Bat” LaPlante, USN (Ret.), to Gary J. Ohls, 3 October 2007; Pokrant, *Desert Shield at Sea*, pp. 78–86, 164–68, 238.
 16. *Department of Defense: Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Joint Publication 1-02, as amended through 14 September 2007 (Washington, D.C.: Joint Staff, 12 April 2001), p. 103; Ronald J. Brown, *U.S. Marines in the Persian Gulf, 1990–1991: With Marine Forces Afloat in Desert Shield and Desert Storm* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1998), p. 103.
 17. Marolda and Schneller, *Shield and Sword*, p. 254.
 18. LaPlante to Ohls, 3 October 2007; Brown, *U.S. Marines in the Persian Gulf*, pp. 104, 107.
 19. Arthur interview, 21 November 2007.
 20. Marolda and Schneller, *Shield and Sword*, pp. 149–50; Pokrant, *Desert Storm at Sea*, pp. 100, 238.
 21. Arthur interview, 21 November 2007; LaPlante to Ohls, 3 October 2007.
 22. Arthur interview, 21 November 2007; LaPlante to Ohls, 3 October 2007.
 23. Rear Adm. Charles R. Saffell, Jr., USN (Ret.), interview with Gary J. Ohls, Fairfax, Virginia, 11 February 2008.
 24. Jenkins interview, 11 February 2008.
 25. Arthur interview, 21 November 2007; Jenkins interview, 11 February 2008; LaPlante to Ohls, 3 October 2007.
 26. Capt. Alan B. Moser, USN (Ret.), interview with Gary J. Ohls, 13 October 2007, Virginia Beach, Virginia, Commander, Amphibious Squadron Six, *Command History for 1991 (OPNAV Report 5750-1)*, 17 March 1992, Post 1990 Command File, Type, Amphibious, CH1991, NHC Operational Archives, Navy Yard, Washington, D.C.
 27. Col. Robert P. McAleer, USMC (Ret.), interview with Gary J. Ohls, Newport, Rhode Island, 28 November 2007; Jenkins interview, 11 February 2008; Saffell interview, 11 February 2008.
 28. Col. James J. Doyle, Jr., USMC (Ret.), interview with Gary J. Ohls, Valley Forge Military Academy and College, Wayne, Pennsylvania, 20 October 2007; Marolda and Schneller, *Shield and Sword*, p. 150.
 29. LaPlante to Ohls, 3 October 2007.
 30. Jenkins interview, 11 February 2008; LaPlante to Ohls, 3 October 2007.
 31. LaPlante to Ohls, 3 October 2007.
 32. Adam B. Siegel, “Eastern Exit: The Noncombatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) from Mogadishu, Somalia, in January 1991” (professional paper, Strike and Amphibious Warfare Department, Center for Naval Analyses, Alexandria, Virginia, October 1991), p. 8.
 33. Arthur interview, 21 November 2007.
 34. James K. Bishop, “Escape from Mogadishu,” *Foreign Service Journal* (March 1991), p. 27.
 35. Siegel, “Eastern Exit,” p. 11.
 36. Moser interview, 13 October 2007; Siegel, “Eastern Exit,” p. 12.
 37. Terrance Lyons and Ahmed I. Samatar, *Somalia: State Collapse, Multilateral Intervention, and Strategies for Political Reconstruction* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1995), p. 15; Moser interview, 13 October 2007.
 38. LaPlante to Ohls, 3 October 2007; Moser interview, 13 October 2007; Jonathan Stevenson, *Losing Mogadishu: Testing U.S. Policy in Somalia* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1995), pp. 15–17.
 39. Moser interview, 13 October 2007; Siegel, “Eastern Exit,” pp. 12–13.
 40. Doyle interview, 20 October 2007; Jenkins interview, 11 February 2008; Moser interview, 13 October 2007; Siegel, “Eastern Exit,” pp. 13, 15.
 41. Saffell interview, 11 February 2008.
 42. Arthur interview, 21 November 2007; LaPlante to Ohls, 3 October 2007; Moser

- interview, 13 October 2007; Siegel, "Eastern Exit," p. 12; T. W. Parker, "Operation Sharp Edge," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* (May 1991), pp. 102–106; James G. Antal and R. John Vanden Berghe, *On Mamba Station: U.S. Marines in West Africa, 1990–2003* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, U.S. Marine Corps, 2004), pp. 129–32.
43. Arthur interview, 21 November 2007; LaPlante to Ohls, 3 October 2007; Moser interview, 13 October 2007; Saffell interview, 11 February 2008.
44. LaPlante to Ohls, 3 October 2007; Commander, Amphibious Squadron Six, *Command History for 1991*.
45. Bishop, "Escape from Mogadishu," p. 27.
46. Lyons and Samatar, *Somalia*, pp. 17–19; Mohamed Sahnoun, *Somalia: The Missed Opportunities* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1994), pp. 6–11; Siegel, "Eastern Exit," p. 7; Robert F. Baumann and Lawrence A. Yates, "My Clan against the World": *U.S. and Coalition Forces in Somalia 1992–1994*, with Versalle F. Washington (Fort Leavenworth, Kans.: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2004), pp. 15–16.
47. Robert J. Schneller, Jr., *Anchor of Resolve: A History of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/Fifth Fleet* (Washington, D.C.: NHC, 2007), p. 48; Lyons and Samatar, *Somalia*, pp. 19–21; Stevenson, *Losing Mogadishu*, p. 36.
48. Bishop, "Escape from Mogadishu," p. 27.
49. Robert A. Doss, "Out of Africa: Rescue from Mogadishu," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* (May 1992), p. 104; Bishop, "Escape from Mogadishu," pp. 27–28.
50. John L. Hirsch and Robert B. Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope: Reflections on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1995), pp. 10–12; Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, *Operational Maneuver from the Sea* (Washington, D.C.: January 1996), pp. 1–3.
51. Bishop, "Escape from Mogadishu," pp. 27–29.
52. Siegel, "Eastern Exit," pp. 7–9, 11; Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, *Expeditionary Warfare*, Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 3 (Washington, D.C.: 16 April 1998), pp. 35, 77, 111–15.
53. Capt. Alan B. Moser, USN (Ret.), to Gary J. Ohls, 5 February 2008.
54. Doyle interview, 20 October 2007; Saffell interview, 11 February 2008.
55. Brown, *U.S. Marines in the Persian Gulf*, p. 84; Moser interview, 13 October 2007; Doyle interview, 20 October 2007.
56. Brown, *U.S. Marines in the Persian Gulf*, p. 85.
57. Jane Perlez, "Effort to Evacuate Foreigners from Somalia Stalls," *New York Times*, 4 January 1991.
58. When considering incursions into areas not controlled by friendly forces, the U.S. military categorizes the threat environment as permissive, uncertain, or hostile as a means of determining the degree of force necessary to accomplish its mission. Joint Publication 1-02, p. 390.
59. Brown, *U.S. Marines in the Persian Gulf*, p. 81.
60. Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The General's War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1995), p. 209.
61. Jenkins interview, 11 February 2008.
62. Saffell interview, 11 February 2008; Siegel, "Eastern Exit," pp. 3, 5, 11–12.
63. Bishop, "Escape from Mogadishu," p. 29; Saffell interview, 11 February 2008.
64. Doyle interview, 20 October 2007.
65. Bishop, "Escape from Mogadishu," p. 29.
66. Jenkins interview, 11 February 2008.
67. Moser interview, 13 October 2007; Saffell interview, 11 February 2008.
68. Brown, *U.S. Marines in the Persian Gulf*, p. 85; Doyle interview, 20 October 2007; Jenkins interview, 11 February 2008; Siegel, "Eastern Exit," pp. 11–15.
69. Brown, *U.S. Marines in the Persian Gulf*, pp. 104, 107; LaPlante to Ohls, 3 October 2007.
70. For air and sea navigation, the U.S. military services measure distance in nautical miles, which are slightly longer than statute miles (1 nautical mile = 1.150779 statute miles). One nautical mile is equal to one minute of arc on the earth's surface, or 1,852 meters. All U.S. operations since 1954 have utilized nautical

- miles. Joint Publication 1-02, p. 363; Siegel, “Eastern Exit,” p. 22.
71. Ray L. Clark, Jr., “Noncombatant Evacuation Operations: Major Considerations for the Operational Commander” (professional paper, Naval War College, 16 June 1995), p. 14; Brown, *U.S. Marines in the Persian Gulf*, p. 87; Siegel, “Eastern Exit,” pp. 2–3, 11.
 72. William S. Bradley and Richard D. Mullen, “Marine Super Stallions to the Rescue,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (April 1991), p. 56.
 73. Brown, *U.S. Marines in the Persian Gulf*, p. 87.
 74. Col. Robert P. McAleer, USMC (Ret.), to Gary J. Ohls, 3 June 2008; Siegel, “Eastern Exit,” p. 18.
 75. In Marine Corps tradition, the term “Marines” when used in conjunction with a unit designation refers to a regiment. For example, “2nd Marines” means 2nd Marine Regiment. A regimental landing team is a reinforced regiment that takes the numerical designator of the base regiment. Therefore, when the 2nd Marines is reinforced and designated a regimental landing team, it becomes RLT-2.
 76. Jenkins interview, 11 February 2008; McAleer interview, 28 November 2007.
 77. McAleer interview, 28 November 2007.
 78. Oats was a member of 4th MEB, G-3 section, who had been assigned to *Guam* due to space limitations aboard *Nassau*. Any such MEB staff officer located on *Guam* was available to assist Doyle in both the planning and actual operations associated with EASTERN EXIT. Jenkins interview, 11 February 2008.
 79. Doyle interview, 20 October 2007; Col. James J. Doyle, Jr., USMC (Ret.), to Gary J. Ohls, 9 June 2008.
 80. Doyle to Ohls, 9 June 2008; McAleer interview, 28 November 2007.
 81. McAleer interview, 28 November 2007; Siegel, “Eastern Exit,” p. 42.
 82. Deborah Schmidt, “Marines Evacuate 260 from Embassy in Somalia,” *Navy Times*, 21 January 1991, p. 4; Brown, *U.S. Marines in the Persian Gulf*, pp. 90–91.
 83. Brown, *U.S. Marines in the Persian Gulf*, p. 86.
 84. Moser interview, 13 October 2007; Saffell interview, 11 February 2008.
 85. Arthur interview, 21 November 2007.
 86. Siegel, “Eastern Exit,” pp. 22 note, 44.
 87. Brown, *U.S. Marines in the Persian Gulf*, p. 88.
 88. The captains of both ships involved in the NEO—Saffell of *Guam* and Capt. James A. Curtis of *Trenton*—were naval aviators, which proved very helpful throughout the operation. Doyle to Ohls, 9 June 2008.
 89. Saffell interview, 11 February 2008.
 90. Ibid.
 91. Siegel, “Eastern Exit,” pp. 3, 23, 25, 44.
 92. C. W. D’Ambra, “The Need for Improved Helicopter Navigation Systems” (Marine Corps Command and Staff College paper, Quantico, Virginia, 1992), p. 7.
 93. Brown, *U.S. Marines in the Persian Gulf*, p. 88; Saffell interview, 11 February 2008; Siegel, “Eastern Exit,” pp. 3, 22–23, 26; Clark, “Noncombatant Evacuation Operations,” p. 16.
 94. Bradley and Mullen, “Marine Super Stallions to the Rescue,” p. 56.
 95. Brown, *U.S. Marines in the Persian Gulf*, p. 85; Siegel, “Eastern Exit,” pp. vi, 3.
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