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## **UN-Consistent:**

### **A Comparison of Australia's Military Interventions in Somalia and Rwanda**

*This article seeks to compare Australia's involvement in two key 1990's peace missions: those to Somalia in 1992-93 and Rwanda in 1994-95. Whilst there are many similarities between the two missions in terms of time, scale and theatre, the differences are more important. Why were such similar circumstances met so differently in terms of scale and organisation? Both missions are usually recalled as failures despite the Australian troops having been extremely successful in their roles during both deployments. Moreover the experiences with intervention in Africa seem to have forever blighted Australian participation in peace missions on that continent.*

Australia has always been a regular participant in United Nations (UN) operations. Not including the Korean War, about 46,000 Australian military personnel and police have served overseas in 56 different peace missions.<sup>1</sup>

This article seeks to compare Australia's involvement in two of those deployments: to Somalia in 1992-3 and Rwanda in 1994-5. The reasons for comparing these two deployments are manifold. Both missions took place at roughly the same time and on the same continent. Both missions were based upon alleviating extreme civil disorder that had created humanitarian crises. Both missions were prompted by a massive outpouring of public horror around the world and in Australia. Both missions saw a larger than normal Australian troop contribution, including significant amounts of infantry. In both missions troops were hurriedly dispatched by the Labour Government of Prime Minister Paul Keating. Lastly, both missions are usually recalled as failures despite the Australian troops having been extremely successful in their particular roles during both deployments.

It is the differences between the two missions that are more important though. The main Australian deployment to Somalia occurred not under UN leadership, but rather with the USA in command. It was the biggest overseas dispatch of Australian combat troops since the Vietnam War. Australia acted rapidly and decisively and undertook a key role in the mission, albeit for a limited time. The Australians were amongst the most successful national contingents who operated in Somalia and they worked quite harmoniously with the local people, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and troops from other nations.

In the case of Rwanda a year later though, the Australian troops were under UN control. There were less troops overall, and roughly half of them were medical personnel. In deploying them, Australia acted slowly and hesitantly. Valuable lessons learned in Somalia were ignored and the troops seemed to receive very little support from their supply chain back home. Whilst the Australians were successful in their role, there was some disharmony within their ranks, as well as with UN Headquarters (HQ), some NGOs and local authorities.

What then had changed? Why were such similar circumstances met so differently in terms of scale and organisation? What historical factors were at work? How had the policy of the Australian Government changed since Somalia and what longer-term repercussions have both these missions had on Australian foreign policy since then?

This paper contends that the American experience with African peace missions has had a major influence on Australia's policy towards participating in them. By examining the development of the missions to Somalia and Rwanda from an Australian perspective and then noting simultaneous political events in the USA, it will be shown that Australia's hesitancy over sending troops to Rwanda was a direct result of the USA shying away from peace operations after its negative experiences in Mogadishu. Likewise, since the Rwandan deployment, Australia has avoided major involvement in African peacekeeping operations and even

more closely followed the American example in the way in which it allocates its troops to UN-led undertakings.

### **The differing cases for intervention**

The Australian Government's attitudes towards peacekeeping in the early 1990's were influenced by the differing pulls of 'nationalist', 'globalist' and 'regionalist' philosophies. The latter was a most important plank of Paul Keating's engagement of Asia. However, different ministries and groups within the Government favoured different ideas about the manner in which Australia should conduct its international relations. International military deployments came mostly within the purview of the Department of Defence and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and it was these two bodies which would have the most bearing on the Government's policies on peacekeeping commitments.<sup>2</sup>

Broadly speaking, the Department of Defence espoused participation in multinational security operations that would occur within Australia's sphere of strategic influence (that is to say, South East Asia and the Pacific). The outcome of these operations might have a direct connection with Australia's security and by participating in them, it was felt that Australia would have a greater say in their conduct. The deepening of alliances with America and New Zealand through participation in collective security operations was also seen as an important outcome. These ideas were outlined in two important Defence documents of 1993 (*Peacekeeping Policy: The Future Australian Defence Force Role* and *Strategic Review 1993*) and a White Paper the following year (*Defending Australia: Defence White Paper 1994*).

Balancing this outlook was DFAT and its influential leader, Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, who was a solid proponent of a more globalist approach to peacekeeping. Evans advocated a concept of 'good international citizenship'. The theory behind this was that Australia should not limit itself to involvements that were of direct and immediate benefit to the nation.

Rather, Evans felt that participation in moral causes, wherever they may be, could not fail but benefit Australia's international reputation and this would result in a longer term gain for the country in terms of prestige and influence, as well as benefiting the world community in general:

But I do believe that an international reputation as a good citizen...enhances any country's overall standing in the world, and that there will be occasions when this reputation will prove helpful to us in pursuing our other international interests, including commercial ones. It is also the case that in the longer term the evolution of just and tolerant societies brings its own international returns - in higher standards of international behaviour, and in the contribution that internal stability makes to international stability and peace.<sup>3</sup>

Balancing these regional and global thoughts were the physical limitations of the peacetime Australian Defence Force (ADF). Highly professional, but relatively small, at the start of the 1990s the ADF was limited in its capability to deploy vast numbers of personnel overseas for extended periods of time. This fact would also influence the response Australia could make to peacekeeping operations.

### **Australian involvement in Somalia**

Given the fact that the Somalian crisis had been deepening over the course of nearly two years, it rated very little mention in Australian politics until America became involved. There was some minor scandal in early 1991 over the fact that Ministerial approval had been granted to export surplus military aircraft to Somalia. But since this export had not proceeded due to the collapse of the Barre presidency, this was of only hypothetical interest.

Of course, up until mid-1992 it seemed that the UN was making progress towards a peace deal with the Somalian factions anyway. It is perhaps understandable then that aid to Somalia did not figure largely in the Australian political agenda.

In addition, the eyes of the world were quite focussed on the deepening crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina. With the European venue and the significant number of Australians who had ties to the ethnic groups involved in the Balkans conflicts, it is again no surprise that the nation was tending to overlook the much more obscure state of Somalia.

It was not until around August 1992, as the Mogadishu agreements began to disintegrate and the famine intensified, that questions were starting to be asked regarding aid commitments from Prime Minister Paul Keating's government. Even then, in parliamentary questioning, aid to Somalia was still being lumped in with aid to Bosnia.<sup>4</sup>

Australia's first significant contribution to the Somalian crisis was financial. Moved by the desperate scenes of starvation relayed by the media, Australians had donated around \$11 million to the relief effort by the end of 1992.<sup>5</sup> The Australian Government had supplemented this with another \$8.5 million in aid donations.<sup>6</sup> On the weekend of 12 -13 October 1992 alone, the Australian public donated \$600,000 in appeals for Somalia and other drought-stricken African nations.<sup>7</sup>

The first military contribution came in the form of a 30-strong contingent to be attached to the UNOSOM (UN Operation in Somalia) force for a period of 12 months. This took place in late October 1992, some months after UNOSOM (or UNOSOM 1 as it was later known) was mandated and some weeks after its initial original contingent of Pakistani security forces arrived in Somalia. The attached Australian personnel, primarily from the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), made up what is known as a Movement Control Unit (MCU), responsible for assisting with the logistics of air operations. With the expected influx of UN troops and humanitarian cargoes, experts in air traffic control, freight handling and remote airfield operations were a logical and valuable input to UNOSOM 1.

Since the major commitment of troops to UNOSOM was already fulfilled by the Pakistanis and even their small deployment was delayed by the faltering

diplomatic efforts in Mogadishu, there was little other contribution Australia could make.<sup>8</sup> Certainly it is hard to fault the Keating government for hanging back and waiting to see what the early outcome of UNOSOM was going to be, especially given the rather hazy objectives of the operation and the quite obvious antipathy of the Somali factions.

By the end of November 1992, only part of the Australian MCU was in place. As the events in Somalia began to deteriorate even further, questions were being asked in the Australian Senate about what additional commitment would be required.<sup>9</sup> The response by Foreign Minister Gareth Evans was perhaps indicative of the frustration and confusion felt by many at the recalcitrant nature of the Somali factions. Evans also flagged the issue of increasing the commitment of troops to Somalia and the possible re-alignment of the UN's task there:

The most I can say is that we are continuing to do what we can...We are monitoring the effectiveness of that deployment on the ground, especially the need for possible additional UN forces or for a change in their current mandated role...The primary need is for some sort of political settlement or some approach which can involve not just the relief of the humanitarian situation but also peace-keeping and political negotiation at the same time.<sup>10</sup>

Within a fortnight, this uncertainty over Australia and the world's involvement in Somalia was dispelled. President Bush's speech of 4 December 1992 announced America's decision to lead a Unified Task Force (UNITAF) aimed at enforcing peace and security in Somalia.

Following the American pronouncement the Australian Government seemed more inclined to participate. President Bush had promised his fellow Americans that 'We will not, however, be acting alone. I expect forces from about a dozen countries to join us in this mission.'<sup>11</sup> Was Australia one of the states the Americans were counting upon?

If they were, they may have been disappointed. The Australians still needed more time to make up their minds about what further involvement they might have with Somalia. At any rate, Australia does not seem to have been high on America's list for requesting help. On 10 December 1992, when in another time zone American special forces troops were assaulting the beaches of Mogadishu against entrenched camera crews, Foreign Minister Evans reported to the Senate that 'I was asked by the US Ambassador earlier this week whether we would consider, first, contributing to this enforcement operation and secondly, making an additional contribution to the existing UN peacekeeping operation in Somalia known as UNOSOM.'<sup>12</sup> The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that Senator Evans had been presented with 'a shopping list of troops to join the US-led multinational peace force in the country'.<sup>13</sup> The article indicated that a battalion-sized formation of combat troops was what the USA sought from Australia.

In fact, the American Embassy in Canberra had made a formal request for Australian participation on Saturday 5 December. Unfortunately this request was lost within the Australian bureaucracy and not directed to DFAT.<sup>14</sup> As two days passed and the situation in Mogadishu turned even worse, senior ADF personnel wondered why New Zealand had publicly confirmed its provision of transport aircraft to UNITAF, but Australia had not apparently been asked for anything. Through the ADF's own military diplomatic channels, the lost request was discovered and a meeting organised between Evans and the US Ambassador for the Tuesday.<sup>15</sup>

Given the speed of the American deployment to Somalia and the urgency of the situation there, it does seem curious that the initial request to Canberra was not followed up more quickly by the Americans. This does rather give the impression that Australian assistance was not a priority for America, or perhaps even regarded as doubtful. This latter view of Australian hesitance would have been borne out by the initial reaction of the Keating government. In the same Senate speech cited above, the Foreign Minister related that in reference to the American request, 'The Government is considering various options in this respect, and decisions will be taken

shortly. I am not in a position, however, to indicate right now what our reaction will be.’<sup>16</sup>

Evans was perhaps being disingenuous here. There certainly had been heavy consideration on what possible reaction to take. Contingency planning within the ADF had begun in earnest in early November. Several options had been worked up, ranging from the despatch of groups of about 200 specialised support personnel (for example, medics, engineers, transport) right up to provision of an infantry battalion.<sup>17</sup> This latter option soon firmed up as the ADF’s favourite. One reason for this preference was the fact that a complete rifle battalion could be self-supporting logistically, as well as having the organic capability to defend itself from the sort of threats likely in Somalia.

Another vital consideration for those who must manage peacetime defence forces was that the Australian Army’s Operational Deployment Force (ODF) was starting to feel left out. Having been designed for deploying overseas at short notice in just this sort of mission, the ODF troops had also trained extensively in peacekeeping-type skills, including crowd control, establishing checkpoints and operating under limited rules of engagement. However, the ODF had never been used overseas, and by the end of 1992, there were some morale problems developing as the unit’s commanders began to feel that they were going to be overlooked again. Major General Murray Blake, the Land Commander, Australia at the time, recalled that he lobbied hard for the use of an ODF infantry battalion for any commitment to Somalia.<sup>18</sup>

The battalion-sized option was therefore almost a certainty by the time Evans was addressing the Senate. Indeed, that very same day (10 December 1992), the officer who would go on to command the Australian detachment to Somalia, Colonel Bill Mellor, was being briefed about a possible deployment.<sup>19</sup> The next day, Mellor was told he would likely be the in-country commander for any possible Australian commitment to Somalia.

Mellor's role with the ADF's Deployable Joint Force HQ confirms the Australian train of thought at this point. This headquarters unit forms the command and control function for any *significant* Australian overseas military deployment, particularly those where Army combat formations of battalion sized and above are required, along with supporting elements from the other defence arms. For Mellor to have been briefed and marked as likely to be sent himself, it is obvious that the ADF and Cabinet were opting for a major commitment of Australian troops.

In fact, the Australian Government was now going to send over 900 combat troops, 30 armoured vehicles, supporting naval vessels and RAAF aircraft to Somalia.<sup>20</sup> This was a greater commitment of infantry than had been sent anywhere by Australia since the Vietnam War. The new Australian deployment to Somalia would be known as Operation Solace.

If such a large contingent was to be sent, the duration of the commitment had to be considered. Australia had neither the troops nor the finances to support an indefinite deployment of hundreds of infantrymen to Africa. America's General Colin Powell had estimated that UNITAF would need about eight weeks to establish sufficient order in Somalia for relief efforts to begin functioning effectively. According to Bob Breen's definitive account of the Australian commitment to Somalia, this estimate was looked upon with some scepticism by the Australian commanders. Generals Peter Gration (Chief of the Defence Force), John Grey (Chief of the General Staff) and Murray Blake (Land Commander) felt that doubling this two-month estimate to four was more realistic.<sup>21</sup> Gration understood that a finite duration would be needed in order for Cabinet (and the public) to accept the deployment of the larger force. This would allay fears that Australia was being drawn into an endless military deployment, whilst at the same time satisfying Evans' ideals of 'good international citizenship'. Seventeen weeks was accordingly selected as the limit for the mission.

Not everybody in the upper echelons of the ADF was particularly impressed by the rush towards expanding the commitment to Somalia. Despite his

backing for sending an ODF rifle battalion, General Blake was sympathetic to the regionalist attitude of the Department of Defence and felt that involvement in Somalia was not in the best interests of the ADF:

We didn't know what strength the enemy forces would be and what it was going to be like and it was certainly a foreign environment to us. We'd never been into that area and we didn't know much about the culture...I saw only marginal value in going to Somalia. I think the government took the right decision to limit the time to seventeen weeks. That was an important decision.

There was certainly value in taking the battalion of the Operational Deployment Force, which had been trained up year after year after year that never went anywhere. We actually took them and we went through the exercise of deploying them and went across there and did that. And that was good. It was good for them. It was good training and a good training experience but in terms of strategic value to the nation it was probably pretty limited...<sup>22</sup>

Blake was also bothered by the fact that the rapidly achieved Cabinet *support* for a deployment to Somalia was nevertheless hobbled by the sluggish *approval* process, which had a real effect on his preparations.

We were frustrated about going to Somalia because the Operational Deployment Force from which we were going to take the majority of the battalion was going on leave or had gone on leave. And we had an indication, a strong indication that Cabinet was likely to agree to the deployment. But for various reasons the cabinet meeting was delayed so every day that ticked past all the soldiers had just gone further and further away and were settling into their leave period. And we knew we were going to have to recall them with all those difficulties and we couldn't do any planning. We were absolutely embargoed on talking to anybody or doing any planning.<sup>23</sup>

Planning may have been hard for General Blake anyway, since the Cabinet themselves did not quite seem to know what an increased mission to Somalia would entail. On 15 December 1992 the Prime Minister officially announced the Government's intention to send combat troops to Somalia. Yet that same day, the Defence Minister, Senator Robert Ray, admitted to

the Senate that Cabinet and the ADF were as yet unsure on exactly what sort of mission parameters they had committed Australian service personnel to and what command and control arrangements would apply. There was also uncertainty about the level of risk the Australians would face and the very crucial question of whether the troops would be required to actively disarm the Somali bandits.<sup>24</sup>

The early uncertainty regarding just how vigorous the Australians would be towards disarming the Somali factions had not been cleared up by the time Keating addressed the House of Representatives on 17 December. He stated that precise details of the force's operational role and rules of engagement would be worked out in conjunction with UNITAF's Joint Task Force Command; that is to say, the Americans.<sup>25</sup> Keating did say though that the Australians would be fully armed and allowed to use force in self defence.<sup>26</sup> This detail was hardly surprising, however, perhaps Keating found the need to add this information given that at the time, there were Australian soldiers serving on the UN monitoring mission in Western Sahara who were operating in an unarmed capacity.

In the Parliament of Australia, both the Opposition and the minor parties endorsed the strengthened commitment to Somalia. One of the few dissenting comments was made by the Opposition (Liberal) Senator, Robert Hill, who gently queried what type of precedent was being created by the UN by non-consensual intervention in the internal affairs of a sovereign state over a humanitarian crisis.<sup>27</sup>

Over the next month, the logistics of the deployment were sorted out. The 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (1 RAR) was the ODF battalion in 'ready' status, though as described by General Blake, readiness over the Christmas break was a relative thing. Colonel Mellor and a small advance party arrived in Mogadishu on 22 December. At about the same time, 1 RAR's vehicles were being stowed aboard HMAS *Jervis Bay* for their sea passage to Africa.

If the Australian politicians were uncertain about the ADF's role in Somalia, the Americans were not. Within hours of Mellor's arrival he was asked by UNITAF's senior operations officer if the Australians would take over the Humanitarian Relief Sector (HRS), centred on Baidoa.<sup>28</sup> (Southern Somalia, where the famine was most prevalent, had been divided into these sectors, each based on a major town.) By devolving these HRSs to the command of other contributing nations, the USA ensured the geographic concentration of its own troops mainly in Mogadishu, rather than piecemeal around the country. The long-term occupation of an HRS by a single force/nationality also made sense from the point of view of intelligence gathering and winning local support.

Excepting that in Mogadishu, Baidoa had seen the fiercest fighting during Somalia's civil war. However, its inland location meant that it was probably more affected by the famine because the logistics of transporting relief supplies there were more difficult. When Mellor and his advance party arrived, Baidoa was the responsibility of a battalion of US Marines, but criminal gangs and corrupt 'guards' were hampering aid efforts and contributing to a general atmosphere of lawlessness and violence.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, some 14 different NGOs were operating there, facilitated by the town's airport.<sup>30</sup> Coincidentally, two of the largest Australian NGOs, World Vision Australia and CARE Australia, had their operations based in Baidoa. This promised for happy synergies with the incoming Australian troops.

Mellor concurred with the American plan and on Christmas Eve 1992 he signalled his recommendation that Baidoa be the base for the ADF's presence in Somalia.<sup>31</sup> The 1 RAR troops arrived by air between 10 and 18 January 1993. The battalion's heavy equipment arrived in Mogadishu on the HMAS *Jervis Bay* and HMAS *Tobruk* on 12 and 21 January respectively.

The primary mission for the Australian contingent in Baidoa was as broad as the aims of Restore Hope: to establish a secure environment for urgent

humanitarian assistance. Mellor and his HQ element broke this objective down into three key tasks:

- 1) The securing of the Baidoa HRS's airports and key installations.
- 2) Securing the food storage and distribution points.
- 3) Mobile security for relief convoys operating within and transiting the HRS.<sup>32</sup>

These objectives were carried out by a combination of tactics, including extensive patrolling, establishing check points and plenty of liaison with civilians. The blend of robust military reactions and constructive 'bridge building' with local residents made the Australian contingent highly effective during their time in Baidoa.

Prior to their arrival, the situation in Baidoa had been deteriorating after an initially calm period following the American occupation of the town. The bugbear of not consistently disarming the militias and bandits had started to cause problems for the US Marines and NGOs, with the latter being increasingly subject to acts of theft, extortion and harassment. Relations between the American troops and the NGOs were very tense, with the relief agencies claiming that the Marines were not forthcoming enough with providing security.<sup>33</sup> Baidoa seemed a microcosm of the whole country. Three days before the first body of Australians arrived in Baidoa, one Marine was killed in Mogadishu and another wounded as opposition to UNITAF elements began to stiffen.

In the face of this escalating tension, the battalion commander of 1 RAR, Lieutenant Colonel David Hurley, determined that a vigorous show of force was the appropriate response to the militias. Whenever Australian troops or civilians were threatened by violence or intimidation, a proportional use of force was returned. In a six week period over February and March 1993, Australian soldiers engaged in 11 gunfights, resulting in several casualties to the Somali gunmen.<sup>34</sup> Less lethal attempts at testing the Australians' resolve (such as stone throwing) were either ignored or responded to with rough

physical treatment. The message soon got through and the occurrence of violence dropped sharply.

It is important to note that the use of deadly force by 1 RAR was not restricted to defending themselves. Aid workers and Somali civilians were also actively defended from the predations of the gunmen, with the rationalisation that all violence in the Baidoa HRS was irreconcilable with 'creating a secure environment'. 'The Australian military leadership took the view that if Somali-on-Somali violence was tolerated or ignored it would fuel copy-cat incidents and led to a cycle of escalating violence and banditry.'<sup>35</sup>

Of equal importance was the fire discipline that the Australians exhibited and their adherence to their Rules of Engagement. By not applying violence indiscriminately, the Australians showed the Baidoans that their local bandits had not just been replaced with foreign ones. This display of restraint and humanity bore fruit in terms of intelligence gathering

Despite the early Parliamentary vacillation, disarmament of the militias was an active part of the Australian policy in Baidoa. The carrying of guns in public was banned and a basic form of weapon registration was established. Only guns belonging to Somalis employed as security guards with NGOs were permitted registration. All other firearms were deemed unauthorised, confiscated and destroyed.<sup>36</sup>

Whilst the use of deadly force was a physical deterrent to the militias, both Colonel Mellor, the overall mission commander and Lt. Col. Hurley, the 1 RAR battalion commander, felt that the work of the contingent's Civil Military Operations Team (CMOT) was perhaps the most instrumental factor in the Australian success at Baidoa. The Team's multifaceted and complex role included: 'representing the battalion group at numerous meetings; liaising with NGOs, UN agencies and local political groups; providing advice and assistance to NGOs and security for their monies; providing liaison officers to companies on in-depth patrolling tasks and for

VIP visits; gathering information on key people, banditry and political activity; coordinating the unloading of relief aircraft, the movement of civil and military air passengers and traffic; and the establishment of the auxiliary security force (i.e. police), the judiciary and prison system.’<sup>37</sup>

Through this constant and co-ordinated liaison with the foreign and local civilians living and working in the Baidoa HRS, the Australian contingent forged a strong bond with its surrounding community. Involving local clan elders in decision making and the rebuilding of order was the other, vital side to the coin of neutralising the bandits; without this resurrection of civil structure, the gunmen would simply step back into the vacuum after the Australians departed.

This bond with local people and NGOs (who had been mistrustful and at odds with the more bellicose US Marines) paid huge dividends in the form of intelligence gathering. Ordinary Somalis felt comfortable in providing tip-offs about weapons caches and bandit activities. However, care had to be exercised to avoid being drawn into inter-clan plotting, as people presented misinformation in the hope of getting their enemies into trouble.<sup>38</sup>

Most important of all for the stability of life in Baidoa, the Australians did much to re-establish the rule of civil law. Rather than impose a foreign (i.e. Australian or American) set of rules on a rural Muslim community in the Horn of Africa, the Australians revived the 1962 Somali penal code.<sup>39</sup> The local people were therefore living under a system of law culturally acceptable to them, as well as being shown that perhaps life was finally returning to a normal, non-military status. To support the rule of law, a police force of around 200 men was recruited and trained, a judicial system put into operation and the beginnings of a prison system established.

In setting up these civilian institutions, the Australians avoided the mistake that the UN had made with its pre-UNOSOM involvement with Somalia and that which the Americans had also committed in Mogadishu: legitimising the militias. It would have been expedient for the Australians to work with

the strongest local militia in Baidoa, the pro-Aidid Somali Liberation Army (SLA). This gang of thugs operated numerous criminal rackets in the region, preying on NGOs and Somalis alike. The SLA liked to represent itself as a legitimate political party in Baidoa and initially demanded that the Australians work with them in securing the area.<sup>40</sup> This would have been a farcical trade-off, likely involving a pact of non-violence against the soldiers in exchange for a *carte blanche* continuation of the SLA's violent organised crime, but now bolstered by their official recognition.

Not only did the Australians refuse to treat with the SLA, but they had a part in actually extinguishing the gang's influence in Baidoa. The leader of the local SLA faction, a much-feared warlord known as Mohammed Gutaale, was arrested by the nascent police force established and supported by the Australians. Gutaale was convicted for multiple murders and robbery by the newly-formed civil court and executed. Within days the SLA gunmen had fled Baidoa.<sup>41</sup> These sorts of policies would be successfully reapplied in East Timor.

As the deployment wound towards its close there was heavy pressure on the Australian government to either extend 1 RAR's stay in Somalia, or else roll the commitment over and replace 1 RAR with another battalion.<sup>42</sup> However, Cabinet members such as Foreign Minister Gareth Evans were uncompromising in their adherence to the original deadline. 'My clear understanding is that they will come out on or about 17 May as we said they would at the beginning,' said Evans to the press. 'There is no mystery about this. We're just not in a position to change it.'<sup>43</sup> Evans subsequently said in a television interview that he had been under intense pressure ('as heavy as I've ever experienced') from key figures in the Clinton administration, such as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell and Vice President, Al Gore, who wanted Australia to continue the same scale of commitment. In that same television interview, Evans explained that he had cited the responsibilities Australia had in other UN missions, particularly Cambodia, as the major reason why the ADF's presence in Somalia would be scaled down.<sup>44</sup> Cost was also a factor. In a time of shrinking defence budgets and

multiple deployments, leaving a significant fighting force on the other side of the world was just too expensive. (The 17-week UNITAF deployment had cost Australia just under A\$20 million.)

In keeping with the announcements of December 1992 though, an Australian MCU would continue to be made available to the UNOSOM mission that was due to take over from UNITAF on 4 May 1993 (and henceforward be known as UNOSOM II).

With the withdrawal of 1 RAR and its supporting elements, completed by 20 May 1993, Australia ceased to be a significant player in Somalia. The MCU personnel continued to provide excellent service, but the region dropped from the Australian political agenda. Few Australians probably even realised that there were still ADF members operating there.

However, despite Australia's lack of real involvement in Somalia from this point, the subsequent debacles the USA suffered there would affect Australian foreign policy sympathetically for years to come. Critically, the dire experiences in the streets of Mogadishu and the resulting realignment of peacekeeping policy that America exhibited would alter the reactions of Australia (and the world) to Africa's next shocking humanitarian crisis: Rwanda.

### **The Growing Reluctance to Participate**

Following the Mogadishu clashes of October 1993, the Clinton administration began an accelerated program of disengagement from Somalia. This retreat was as much ideological as it was military. Although it was obvious in late 1993 that the USA was beginning to reposition itself as regards the UN, it was not until May 1994 that a formal policy was laid down. In a document known as Presidential Decision Directive 25 (PDD 25), Clinton's administration clarified their new realism. 'Peace operations are not and cannot be the centrepiece of US foreign policy.'

However...properly conceived and well-executed peace operations can be a useful element in serving America's interests.'<sup>45</sup> These guidelines would be echoed in Australian policies and therefore some examination of them is warranted.

In PDD 25 tough new standards were proposed that any peace keeping mission would have to satisfy before America would support it in the SC. In summary, these were:

- That involving the UN would advance US interests, and there must be an international community of interest for dealing with the problem on a multilateral basis.
- There must be a threat to or breach of international peace and security.
- That there must be clear objectives and an understanding of where the mission would lie in terms of peace keeping or peace enforcement.
- For traditional (Chapter VI) peacekeeping operations, a ceasefire should be in place and the consent of the parties obtained before the force is deployed.
- For peace enforcement (Chapter VII) operations, the threat to international peace and security must be considered significant.
- The means to accomplish the mission must be available, including the forces, financing and mandate appropriate to the mission.
- That the political, economic and humanitarian consequences of inaction by the international community needed to have been weighed and considered unacceptable.
- The operation's anticipated duration was tied to clear objectives and realistic criteria for ending the operation.<sup>46</sup>

The ghosts of Somalia are apparent in many of these checks.

The Directive stated that not all of these standards had to be fulfilled in any single case, but that a cumulative weight would be attached to each criterion

that was met. Since most of the points were entirely subjective, the USA was really presenting an official 'escape clause' for itself, couched in terms of formal policy.

There were even tougher standards set for US *participation* in any UN peace operation. This was particularly so in terms of command and control arrangements and the desire that 'The role of US forces is tied to clear objectives and an endpoint for US participation can be identified.'<sup>47</sup> Effectively, the rules laid down in PDD 25 meant that the US was reserving the right to never again commit troops to a UN operation, and in particular, that American troops would never be placed under a local UN commander. Overall the document stated 'It is not U.S. policy to seek to expand either the number of UN peace operations or U.S. involvement in such operations. Instead, this policy, which builds upon work begun by previous administrations and is informed by the concerns of the Congress and our experience in recent peace operations, aims to ensure that our use of peacekeeping is selective and more effective.'<sup>48</sup>

### **The Australian reaction**

On the other side of the Pacific, the Australian Government was saying much the same thing. The perceived humiliation suffered by the Americans in Somalia had not directly involved Australia, but the coverage of the American troubles there seemed to taint public perceptions. The early successes by Australian troops in Baidoa were negated by the mass media's portrayal of the more recent and more spectacular fighting in Mogadishu. Followed by America's rapid disengagement, this coloured the whole intervention as a failure. The scapegoating of the UN was part of this mindset. (Away from Africa, the long-running travesty in the former Yugoslavia also shed a negative light on the UN.)

Writing in the latter part of 1993, Minister for Defence, Robert Ray, outlined Australia's new stance on UN operations, generated by the

*Peacekeeping Policy* paper released earlier that year. The major points were very similar to America's PDD 25.

...such activities (UN peacekeeping operations) are supplementary to the central role of the ADF. That role is the direct defence of Australia and its interests and the promotion of those interests within our immediate neighbourhood. Each request we receive for participation in a peacekeeping or peacemaking operation must be considered on its merits and with a very clear understanding of its implications for our national interests...we have a strong preference for participation in our area of primary strategic interest although this doesn't preclude our considering operations further abroad.<sup>49</sup>

Much like the Americans, Australia was starting to hedge its bets over UN operations by providing malleable criteria that 'must be considered'. Also in lock step with the Americans were further criticisms regarding the command and control arrangements of UN missions and the hazy mandates that they operated under.

Put simply, Australia will be less inclined to look favourably on a request to participate where there is any ambiguity about the nature of the operation in question, its time limits and the level of ADF involvement...we will not look sympathetically at attempts to alter these once the operation is underway....We continue to be very sceptical of the kind of ad hoc and ill-planned requests for assistance of which we see far too many.<sup>50</sup>

Senator Ray also went on to criticise the UN's slow and incomplete reimbursements to nations contributing troops, as well as to praise the model arrangements that had accompanied Operation Solace (the Australians in Somalia). Ray took pains to point out that this exemplary operation was *not* UN-commanded.<sup>51</sup>

In the Senate, Ray was even more scathing of the UN's arrangements for military operations. He also justified Australian policy by yoking it with that of other 'major countries'. He claimed that the UN had shown great deficiencies in planning and decision making and that the mood amongst

many of his fellow defence ministers around the world was that unless some of these issues were addressed the likely trend was a reduction of involvement in peacekeeping.<sup>52</sup>

In the meantime, Foreign Minister Gareth Evans was floating his own suggestions for the reform of the UN.<sup>53</sup> He espoused creating an elite team of trouble-shooting ambassadors to engage in preventative diplomacy on behalf of the UN. Other recommendations included simplifying the structure of the UN and even putting a small levy on all international air tickets to help bail the UN out of debt.<sup>54</sup> In effect, whilst Defence Minister Ray was promulgating changes to the military efficiency of the UN, Evans was Australia's advocate for the organisation's systemic and bureaucratic reform.

As this criticism of the UN gained weight in Australian and American politics it was being echoed by other nations, such as Canada. With such regular peace keeping contributors all expressing their discontent and intention to act more regionally, the next African humanitarian crisis was quickly arriving to test these embryonic policies.

### **Australian involvement with Rwanda**

Debate about how best to help the Rwandans followed the same cycle in Australia as it did the rest of the world. When the main wave of killing began in April 1994, Australian politicians opined that the UN should be the body to organise assistance but that Australia was not in a position to help them at that stage. At least not until the UN sorted out the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), a mission created to monitor a ceasefire agreement long since shattered. Even then, the participation of the proverbial 'major country' was considered preferable for Australia's peace of mind in committing resources.<sup>55</sup>

Meanwhile, Canberra was distracted by events closer to home. In East Timor, the possibility of the UN being involved to broker peace talks

between the Indonesians and the local guerrillas was being raised. As the province moved towards its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of occupation there were increasing demonstrations of resistance in Dili and diplomatic pressure from around the world was being brought to bear on Indonesia. With a major political and/or military event possibly about to occur on their doorstep, it is small wonder that the Keating government was not willing to leap into a Rwandan adventure.

Of similar import was the secessionist crisis in Bougainville that had been sputtering since 1990, but by 1994 had become more violent and well-established. Rebel activity on the island threatened regional stability and commercial interests. A delegation from the Australian Parliament visited Bougainville in April 1994 (just as Rwanda imploded). Upon their return it became obvious that Australia would probably need to intervene in some form of peacekeeping role, though the commitment of significant forces was not envisaged.<sup>56</sup>

With their proximity, security value and economic importance, the Bougainville and East Timor situations were far more important to Australia than yet another African calamity. Since the troubles in both these neighbouring islands satisfied the Government's criteria regarding regional responsibility and 'interest', holding back troops from Rwanda in case they were needed in Dili or Arawa would have been purely commonsense. Add to this the view that the UNAMIR mandate was unclear and all of Defence Minister Robert Ray's post-Somalia criticisms of peacekeeping operations were present.

There was however some disagreement on the wisdom of this strategy. Gareth Evans and DFAT favoured earlier intervention in Rwanda.<sup>57</sup> Even the Chief of the Defence Force at the time, Admiral Alan Beaumont, supported sending a contingent to Rwanda, if only because it would provide operational experience at a time when Australia only had about 120 personnel operating on peacekeeping missions worldwide.<sup>58</sup> Ray continued to provide objections regarding the security of any detachment sent to Africa

and the decision was further deferred, pending the report of a reconnaissance party (see below).

Financial and humanitarian aid however was made available to the Rwandans, via government donations and Australian NGOs. A laudable exception to the general parliamentary lethargy was the Liberal Senator Dr John Herron, who reverted to his old profession of surgeon and spent two months with CARE Australia in Rwanda providing medical aid to victims of the violence. The best the Australian Government could do was promise that emergency medical teams would be sent to Rwanda when the situation had stabilised.

As the initial killing spree eased off in July 1994, it became obvious that the complete lack of action on the part of UN members had allowed one of the world's worst post-War atrocities to proceed unmolested. In Australia, condemnation of the Government's inertia by aid agencies and the public was stinging. The NGOs begged the Government to get more involved, at least providing an airlift capacity for supplies.<sup>59</sup> In response to this, Gareth Evans said that he felt there was now 'a credible basis' for Australia to join UNAMIR.<sup>60</sup> The Minister for Overseas Development, Gordon Bilney, said that Australia's contribution of A\$3.5 million 'stacked up well' against the amounts donated by other nations. However this amount of Federal funding was less than half that which was raised by members of the public.<sup>61</sup> (Note that these amounts were still less than the public and private money that the Somalia famine attracted.)

Towards the second half of July, the Government firmed up its plans for contributing to Rwanda. Within three days of Mr Bilney proudly describing Australia's financial contribution as 'stacking up well', the Government had announced another A\$6.5 million would be added.<sup>62</sup> Additionally an Australian Medical Support Force (AMSF) of around 300 personnel would now be attached to UNAMIR for a period of 12 months. Ray's concerns about the security of ADF personnel would be allayed by including a rifle company in the detachment.

The exact role of the AMSF was a little muddled in the welter of publicity surrounding the announcement. There was an assumption by the public that medical personnel would be going to Rwanda to help the Rwandans. Prime Minister Keating's press release of 25 July 1994 is perhaps to blame. In this he stated:

They (*the AMSF*) will be supporting UNAMIR in its mission to contribute to the security of civilians at risk in Rwanda, and to provide security and support for the distribution of relief supplies and humanitarian operations. The Australian Medical Support Force will also be able to provide assistance to Rwandan civilians at the nearby King Faisal Hospital.<sup>63</sup>

However, as far as the military were concerned, not to mention UNAMIR HQ, the AMSF was there to provide medical support solely to the UN troops. Their role would be to treat UNAMIR personnel who were sick or injured during the course of their deployment and not to provide general medical services to the Rwandan civilians.<sup>64</sup> Humanitarian work was the province of the NGOs. For the AMSF this task would only be conducted through any 'spare capacity' and was not officially funded by either Australia or the UN.<sup>65</sup> Keating's press release is misleading in the respect that it gave the impression that the Australians would be more involved with the civilians than was planned.

Such untidy attention to detail typified the rush to deploy the AMSF. Perhaps this disorder was a result of the fact that in committing troops to UNAMIR, the Australian Government was breaking every policy it had just developed on UN operations: joining a mission outside of Australia's region of principal interest, one with an unclear mandate, apparently *ad hoc* and with questions over its duration and long-term goals.

The man who would have overall command of that first detachment to UNAMIR, Colonel Pat McIntosh, described the rapid and confused process in which the Australian troops were dispatched. Apparently, few lessons had been learned from the deployment to Somalia regarding the need to

forewarn troops of a likely mission whilst the formal Cabinet decision was pending.

Halfway through '94 we got word that we might be looking at deploying a force to Rwanda and I was identified as the commanding officer of that force if it was to deploy, so I was sent off on a reconnaissance of Rwanda <sup>66</sup>....Then we went to New York to have discussions with the UN Headquarters Department of Peacekeeping Operations just to brief them on what we'd found over there and looking at what they wanted us to provide and trying to identify the kind of force that would be needed and what capabilities would be required. Then we went back to Australia from there.

There was no commitment at that time for us to send that force, but there was a reasonable degree of likelihood that we would be sending a medical support force. I was quite confident at that point that the government had made this decision that we would send it, but they were reserving a decision on *when* they would send it. So the biggest problem we had was that when they made that decision that that's what we were going to send that they told us then to keep it quiet. 'We don't want you to publicise it. Don't let the word get out.' That one thing really caused us an enormous amount of grief during the preparation period.....

...As a result of the decision to keep it quiet, there was virtually no planning done for the administrative preparation for the deployment of this force. The people that were going had not been told that they were going, and they weren't told until the announcement was made on the 25th of July 1994 that we were deploying this force.<sup>67</sup>

Another critical lesson from Somalia was also completely ignored in the race to send troops to Rwanda: that the best results came from using a complete unit in a state of operational readiness that had worked and trained together for a lengthy period and was prepared for its overseas role. Instead, the ADF started to put together a hodgepodge of personnel and equipment drawn from all over the country. The two main elements of medics and infantry also needed to be supported by various logistic and administrative personnel.

The result was a hybrid force: a 300-strong medical detachment that was roughly half composed of riflemen.<sup>68</sup> The overall commander (Colonel McIntosh) was an infantry officer with no experience of medical operations. The remainder of the troops came from 63 different units across all three services and the equipment they were given was the dregs that quartermasters across the country were looking to write off.<sup>69</sup>

The speed that this deployment was progressing with was in some ways impressive. In less than a month from the time that the initial reconnaissance team was dispatched to Rwanda (which more or less coincided with the ceasefire), the decision was made to go, the contingent was assembled and the main elements arrived in Kigali. By August 20 1994, more or less the complete detachment was in place.

Although this sudden burst of speed reflects well on the determination of the Australian Government to aid the Rwandans, it does rather smack of policy on the run. Doubtless this was a product of the tensions between Defence and DFAT, with the 'regionalist' former having procrastinated for a time before suddenly giving way to the 'globalist' latter. There are of course also the questions as to why, once the decision to go had been made, the valuable planning lessons painfully learnt in Somalia had been disregarded.

Lastly, at a more human level, the rapid dispatch of the troops to a scene of genocide in central Africa, with almost no preparation or briefing, was not conducive to morale and a sense of well-being. Colonel McIntosh again:

This is people coming in from units on no readiness, no concept that they were going anywhere. Just pulled off ships, pulled off bases and just ripped straight up to Townsville to go to Rwanda. Never got back to see their families before they left. Just terrible. ...So the absolute worst case situation you could imagine for deployment on an operation, and probably deploying on the worst operation that anyone in the Australian Defence Force had been on ever, since Vietnam probably.... The movement system, the logistic system, the planning system, the command system, the whole lot, everything failed.<sup>70</sup>

Once in Rwanda, the AMSF was based at the Kigali Central Hospital, though it was quartered elsewhere. During the mission, detachments of varying strengths were sent around Rwanda to carry out medical tasks, such as operating health clinics within some of the displaced persons camps.

One fundamental difference to the Somalia mission was that in Rwanda there was a recognised government capable of making policy and exerting authority beyond using the mere barrel of a gun. To operate successfully in Rwanda, the AMSF needed to build relationships with authority figures, no matter how odious they might be. One important tool for doing this was the medical facilities the AMSF operated. Far superior to anything that had ever existed in the country before, offering treatment to VIPs was a valuable bargaining chip. The medical commander of the first contingent, Colonel Wayne Ramsey, was more than happy to provide a service that was technically outside his mandate (such as helping the wife of a government minister who was having a difficult labour) in order to build co-operation over the long term.<sup>71</sup>

Despite this, conflict with the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) was a significant factor during the AMSF's deployment. Colonel McIntosh had from the outset taken a commendably neutral approach to the RPA and the new Rwandan Government. He felt that in general, UNAMIR was too beholden to the RPA and not robust enough in reacting to their sometimes unreasonable and/or criminal behaviour. The Australians, on the other hand, followed their mandate more faithfully and did not hesitate to use their freedom of movement, make threats of force when protecting UN personnel who were being intimidated, and deny armed RPA troops access to the hospital and the AMSF's accommodation. As McIntosh later told a Parliamentary committee investigating the ADF's peacekeeping capabilities:

The reason we were so effective over there was that the protection elements that I had with me were capable of being able to provide protection and do their job regardless of what may occur with the security situation. It gave them the confidence to be able to do their

job properly, to be able to intercede, to be able to save lives, and to be able to go and take the medical elements to whatever part of Rwanda we needed to be in to do our job as tasked by the UN. I would have to say we were the only UN force in Rwanda that did that; the rest went away from every roadblock that the RPA put in their way. We did not go away from one.<sup>72</sup>

This obviously did not endear the Australians to the new Rwandan Government and its security forces. As the mission wound towards a close, there were some confrontations engineered by the RPA's Liaison Officer at UNAMIR HQ. These were apparently designed to cause the expulsion of the Australian personnel through diplomatic debacles.

The most serious of these involved a staged (and very minor) vehicle accident outside the Australian barracks. The RPA immediately tried to arrest the female driver of the Australian vehicle and there was an extended and very heated confrontation in the streets, with Colonel McIntosh refusing continual requests to hand over the driver, even in the face of UNAMIR HQ demands that he do so. Eventually, some of those VIP relationships that had been built over the months became useful, with the Australians arranging to take the driver to the offices of the Rwandan Public Prosecutor to make a statement. The Australians, in particular their legal section, had always dealt with this official in a cordial manner and he now repaid this respect by granting immunity from prosecution for the driver.<sup>73</sup>

There was also some conflict within the Australian contingent. As was to be expected, the mix of combat troops and medical staff from across the services made for some tension between the different groups of strangers, suddenly thrown into an extremely stressful situation. Disagreements also occurred within the ranks over what the precise role of the AMSF should be (i.e. how much treatment of civilians should be undertaken) and how to best alleviate the overwhelming suffering surrounding them.<sup>74</sup>

Another source of frustration was a perceived lack of support from the ADF and Government back in Australia. Key medical equipment, such as ventilators, failed to arrive for several weeks, effectively negating the

AMSF's intensive care capabilities. Thanks to the ingenuity of some of the technicians with the detachment, vandalised Rwandan ventilators were patched together and put into temporary operation. But it seemed that the logistical commitment to UNAMIR was not forthcoming in Australia. In the opinion of Colonel McIntosh, this was mainly due to political manoeuvring within the ADF and plain incompetence. He claims he was told by Australian-based logistics elements that the AMSF in Rwanda 'were not the only organisation in town' and would have to wait their turn behind other Australian units that were being supplied whilst on exercises.<sup>75</sup>

This question of carrying out humanitarian work was perhaps the greatest conundrum the AMSF faced. The Australian public expected the AMSF to be helping sick and injured Rwandan civilians. However, there was no funding for this work. The problem was partially solved by taking a pragmatic approach: what could the contingent realistically achieve? The leaders of the AMSF placed the following criteria on any attempt at humanitarian work: '...the contribution must be consistent with the country's long term needs, the humanitarian effort must not endanger our primary mission (*treating UN personnel*), and the objectives must be achievable by the end of our second rotation.'<sup>76</sup>

By simple expedients such as being careful not to discard unused items from surgical kits (and then redirect them to local needs) or providing ADF staff to work with NGOs, a significant contribution was made by the AMSF to the health of Rwandans. Perhaps their greatest legacy though was the refurbishment of the Kigali Central Hospital wing and the re-establishment of the communal health centres. These two institutions were the basis of the Rwandan health system before the crisis.

As it turned out, about half of the patients treated by the AMSF and 85% of their surgical cases were Rwandans.<sup>77</sup> This was a beneficial outcome given the original mission parameters and is a credit to the AMSF members and their determination to help local people.

Just as they did in Somalia with the legal system, the Australians were astute enough to ensure that this resurrection of the local health system must be centred around the Rwandan people, rather than just something imposed by outsiders. For example, there were medical NGOs willing to operate at the hospital, but they refused to work under the authority of the facility's Rwandan administrator. (The administrator had been appointed by the new Government and was plainly not up to the job of running a central referral hospital.) But the AMSF's commanders realised that local input was vital in the long run, and that by supporting the local authorities in developing the hospital, it would continue to benefit Rwandans long after the NGOs had moved on to the next crisis.

The Australians therefore pledged infrastructure support in the form of electricity, laundry, water and sanitation to any NGOs willing to work at the hospital, but made this offer conditional on the NGOs working under the Rwandan administrator. The NGOs were forced to comply because without the Australians' technical assistance, they could not function. The result was that a functioning hospital was gently eased back into the control of the Rwandan authorities.

The AMSF also went about training and mentoring new and existing Rwandan medical staff, right up to the level of surgeon. 'In essence we were positive in our approach and persevered in assisting the local staff to become empowered to bring about effective change,' wrote Beverly Wright, one of the members of the AMSF.<sup>78</sup> This grass roots relationship building was one aspect of the Somalia mission that was carried into Rwanda, and then perhaps most successfully of all, into East Timor.

Colonel McIntosh, found that dealing with UNAMIR HQ was a course of considerable frustration for him during his tenure. He felt that there was no overall operational plan for solving Rwanda's problems. His main criticism was that the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations were still referring back to the need to implement the Arusha Accord of 1993, when circumstances and the balance of political power had since changed

dramatically. Without concrete goals, McIntosh believed, UNAMIR had no ability to construct a logical sequencing of tasks that would alleviate the military, humanitarian and development aspects of the UN effort. UNAMIR then became an entirely reactive mission rather than a force for progress.<sup>79</sup>

The right to use force outside of personal self defence was also a chafing point for the AMSF commander. There seemed to exist confusion at UNAMIR HQ on the mandate of the mission, with the staff taking ‘a very benign view of the use of force, believing that the UN force had no discretion to use force under Chapter VI of the Charter except in self-defence. And self-defence was rarely extended to those being protected by the UN.’<sup>80</sup> This contradicted the interpretation of the AMSF’s own legal officer. The schism over use of force and extending it to protect civilians was to constantly recur in the Rwanda mission. When this was coupled by the over-timid diplomatic approach that the UN took to the RPA, much of the initiative in solving the country’s refugee problem was lost.

Definitely the most horrendous example of this dithering to involve the Australians was the massacre at Kibeho, which occurred in late April 1995, during the second rotation of AMSF personnel. The RPA had long demanded the closure of all camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDP’s), claiming that they were a security problem, a safe-haven for war criminals and bandits, and not conducive to the long-term stability of Rwanda. There was some merit to this argument, but the mainly Hutu residents of the camps were terrified of returning to their homes for fear of being persecuted by the new, Tutsi-dominated regime. This was justified, since some Hutus who did try to return home were murdered *en route*. The NGOs were unwilling to close down the camps for this reason, even though their very existence was prolonging the country’s problems.

In November 1994 the RPA announced that it would forcibly close the IDP camps, including that at Kibeho, in the west of Rwanda, which housed around 100,000 IDP’s.

Whilst Colonel McIntosh agreed with the need to wind down the camps, he and other Australian officers felt sure that the forcible closure planned by the RPA would just result in more massacres. He pleaded with UNAMIR HQ to deny the RPA permission to close the camps, believing that use of force would be justifiable to prevent this impending disaster. UNAMIR HQ disagreed, feeling that their mandate offered no authority to stop the RPA.<sup>81</sup> Eventually, a co-operative approach was established between UNAMIR, the RPA, key NGOs and the Rwandan Government. Known as Operation Retour, this effort was focussed on the calm and orderly shut down of the camps, with adequate provision of logistics to transport people safely back to their homes. The basis of the operation involved slowly turning off the supply of food and water at the camps so that people would be encouraged to move on.

This system failed at Kibeho, one of the last camps to be closed, because the NGOs responsible there refused to reduce the supply of food and water. Indeed, they increased their reserves. This angered the RPA and they began to surround the camp, slowly squeezing the perimeter tighter so that eventually, there were several thousand panicky refugees crowded onto a single bare hillside. The AMSF had a presence at Kibeho; a small detachment of medics that were providing basic health care to the multitudes. They visited the camp each day, but the RPA would not allow them to stay overnight.

The Australians were ensconced inside a medical compound surrounded by barbed wire. A handful of infantrymen were their only protection. A company of Zambian infantry were similarly deployed around the small hospital at Kibeho.

Inevitably the tension flared up. Around 22 April 1995 a panic amongst the refugees caused a stampede. RPA and militia troops moved into the camp to 'restore order'. The result quickly became a three day massacre, with around 3 – 4,000 refugees butchered. The tiny Australian contingent was powerless to act. UNAMIR HQ denied them permission to open fire in defence of the

refugees, and, realistically, had they done so, their compound would have been quickly over-run. At one point an infantry section had to fix bayonets to prevent this occurring, but no shots were fired. The AMSF personnel were even forced to push frantic refugees out of the compound and into the arms of the killers. So contemptuous of the UNAMIR troops were the RPA that they murdered women and children directly in front of the Australians, knowing full well that they could not open fire except to defend themselves.<sup>82</sup>

The Australians worked bravely throughout this carnage, often putting themselves at risk to rescue, treat and evacuate the refugees.<sup>83</sup> Some unwounded children were draped in bloodied bandages and put onto ambulances for evacuation, since the RPA would not permit the departure of unwounded individuals. After about three days, the killing wound down. Throughout the rest of the deployment to Rwanda, Australian medical personnel continued to work in Kibeho and other places like it, treating the victims of this final flash of mass violence.

Overall, there were two six-month rotations of Australian troops that passed through Rwanda; 638 personnel in all. The last Australians came home in at the end of 1995. UNAMIR was officially disbanded in March 1996.

Like the deployment to Somalia, the UNAMIR detachment was largely forgotten by the Australian public. Again, the larger themes of failure and UN incompetence obscured what had been a very successful application of medical assistance. The legacy of the AMSF in Rwanda was some further logistic lessons about deployment overseas, some of which would be applicable (though not necessarily *applied*) to the subsequent East Timor operation. Sadly, a further consequence would be the recognition that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) does not only occur in troops who experience prolonged combat. The PTSD issues faced by many of the soldiers who served in Rwanda (and at Kibeho especially) are something Australia and the ADF will have to deal with for many years to come.<sup>84</sup> A positive result of this was that more attention was directed towards

monitoring stress and providing counselling for the troops who served in East Timor.

## **Conclusion**

Australian policy regarding peace operations was undeniably shaped by the experiences in Somalia and Rwanda, especially by the general perception of these missions as failures. The two major outcomes of this have been circumspection about providing major commitments to UN-led missions and an even firmer focus on regional deployments.

Having followed the US lead in shying away from UN-led missions (at least in terms of any sizeable contribution), Australia has been very cautious about what missions it becomes involved in, particularly in regards to the question of who leads them. Since Rwanda, Australia has not made a sizeable contribution to any UN-led mission. A few dozen observers, monitors and logistics personnel are currently serving around the world in small UN missions, mostly monitoring scenarios in long-term, static situations.

Tellingly, no large-scale offers of Australian troops have ever been made again to major UN operations in Africa, such as those currently running in Sierra Leone or Côte d'Ivoire.

Australia's major military involvements since UNAMIR have all been with non-UN campaigns led by the USA, or else to UN-sanctioned missions led by Australia itself. The Australians sent to East Timor with INTERFET for example were under Australian command, despite it being a UN mission. Once command of the operation had passed to the UN and became UNTAET, Australian troop numbers were reduced. The War on Terror that saw Australians fighting in Afghanistan was a US-led effort. The invasion and occupation of Iraq was likewise US-led. Other significant deployments were the unarmed Peace Monitoring Group sent to Bougainville in 1998 – 2003 (led by Australia) and the Solomon Islands interventions (led by

Australia) in July 2003 and April 2006. Both of these missions were mainly police affairs that did not involve the UN. The despatch of around 2,000 troops and police to East Timor to quell unrest in mid-2006 was made at the direct request of East Timor's Government and was therefore outside UN auspices. The regionalist philosophy now seems more dominant in deciding what peace operations are undertaken.

Today, the globalist outlook is mainly exhibited through moral and military support for the American-led War on Terror. Of course there is a regionalist aspect even to this, with the connections between Middle Eastern and Central Asian terrorism and those extremist groups operating in the Asia-Pacific region.

It must also be conceded that with so many of the ADF's shrinking resources being directed towards either the War on Terror or to policing the ever increasing instability on Australia's doorstep, it is uncertain how much could be spared for large UN commitments. However, the trend of avoiding involvement in UN-led operations was apparent long before 9/11 and the more recent spate of volatility in the Pacific.

Given that Australian troops were incredibly successful within their mission parameters in both Somalia and Rwanda (and no battle casualties were sustained) it is disappointing that policy since then has been to follow the American lead and shun UN missions. After the Keating Labour government was unseated in 1996, Australia's alliance with America has grown even stronger and the parallels in policy toward the UN and collective versus unilateral action even more striking.

Just as many commentators have blamed the USA's inglorious exit from Somalia for the rise of Islamic terrorism and recent paradigms in world events, it seems that the slaughter in the streets of Mogadishu in October 1993 had other ramifications, even altering the peacekeeping policies of nations, like Australia, that were uninvolved.

The Rwandans were the first casualties of that policy shift.

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<sup>1</sup> Copeland, Paul, 2005, *The Australian Defence Force's Involvement in Peacemaking and Peacekeeping Operations 1947- Present*, Australian Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association available at <http://www.peacekeepers.asn.au/missions/index.htm>

<sup>2</sup> McDougall, Derek, 'Australia's Peacekeeping Role in the Post-Cold War Era', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 24, No. 3, (2002): 590 – 608

<sup>3</sup> Evans, Gareth *Foreign Policy And Good International Citizenship*, Address by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Canberra, 6 March 1990. Transcript obtained from International Crisis Group website, [http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/speeches\\_ge/foreign\\_minister/1990/060390\\_fm\\_fpandgoodinternationalcitizen.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/speeches_ge/foreign_minister/1990/060390_fm_fpandgoodinternationalcitizen.pdf), accessed 15/12/06.

<sup>4</sup> Parliament of Australia, Senate Hansard, 18/08/92, page 22

<sup>5</sup> Parliament of Australia, House Hansard, 17/12/92, page 4055,

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Parliament of Australia, Senate Hansard, 17/12/92, page 5376.

<sup>8</sup> Additionally, Canada, Austria, Egypt and Belgium were in line to contribute infantry detachments.

<sup>9</sup> Parliament of Australia, Senate Hansard, 25/11/92, page 3462.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Bush, George H., *Address to the Nation on the Situation in Somalia*, 4 December 1992, available from George Bush Presidential Library website:

<http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/papers/1992/92120400.html>

<sup>12</sup> Parliament of Australia, Senate Hansard, 10/12/92, page 4668.

<sup>13</sup> Wright, Tony, 'US Wants 1,000 Diggers In Somalia', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11/12/1992.

<sup>14</sup> Breen, Bob, *A Little Bit of Hope: Australian Force – Somalia*, St Leonards, Allen & Unwin, 1998, p. 23.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Parliament of Australia, Senate Hansard, 10/12/92, page 4668.

<sup>17</sup> Breen (1998) pp. 20-21

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p. 24

<sup>19</sup> Mellor, Bill 'The Australian Experience in Somalia', in, *Peacekeeping: Challenges for the Future*, edited by Smith, Hugh, Canberra, Australian Defence Studies Centre, 1993, p.59.

<sup>20</sup> Specifically, the force would comprise the four rifle companies of the 1<sup>st</sup> battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment plus their armoured personnel carriers, engineer and logistics elements.

<sup>21</sup> Breen (1998) p. 25

<sup>22</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, 'Interview with Murray Blake', transcript from *The Australians at War Film Archive*, tape 10, time code 04.00 – 14.30, (2004), available at <http://www.australiansatwarfilmarchive.gov.au/aawfa/interviews/1815.aspx>

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. tape 10, time code 17.30.

<sup>24</sup> Parliament of Australia, Senate Hansard, 15/12/92, page 4985

<sup>25</sup> Parliament of Australia, House Hansard, 17/12/92, page 4055.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Parliament of Australia, Senate Hansard, 17/12/92, page 5378. (Hill though was not prepared to entertain any concerns about the Americans having effective control over the Australian troops. He was fulsome in his praise of President Bush and the need for allowing the USA to take a leadership role in world security affairs. These loyal opinions were of course reflected in Hill's later tenure as Minister for Defence during Australia's involvement with the War on Terror and the Iraq campaign of George W. Bush.)

<sup>28</sup> Mellor (1993), p.60.

<sup>29</sup> Londey, Peter, *Other People's Wars: A History of Australian Peacekeeping*, Crows Nest, Allen & Unwin, 2004, p. 183

<sup>30</sup> Mellor, 1993, p.60.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

- <sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.62
- <sup>33</sup> Patman, R.G., 'Beyond "the Mogadishu Line": Some Australian Lessons for Managing Intra-State Conflicts', *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol, 12, No. 1, (Spring 2001), p. 64
- <sup>34</sup> Coulthard-Clark, Chris, *The Encyclopaedia of Australia's Battles*, Crows Nest, Allen & Unwin, 2001, pp. 294-5.
- <sup>35</sup> Patman, (2001), p. 69.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 65.
- <sup>37</sup> Mellor, (1993), p. 63.
- <sup>38</sup> Londey (2004) p. 189.
- <sup>39</sup> Patman, (2001), p. 66
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 66
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>42</sup> McCarthy, Phillip, 'Aust Force Pressured To Stay', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20/3/93.
- <sup>43</sup> McCarthy, Phillip, 'Evans Stands Firm On Somalia Pullout', *The Age*, 3/4/1993.
- <sup>44</sup> Chamberlin, Paul, 'Somalia Troops To Be Home On Time', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12/4/1993.
- <sup>45</sup> Statement by the Press Secretary, *President Clinton Signs New Peacekeeping Policy*, Office of the Press Secretary, Washington DC, 5/5/94, available at [www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd25.htm](http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd25.htm)
- <sup>46</sup> Bureau of International Organizational Affairs, 1996, 'Clinton Administration Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations', US Department of State, available at [www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd25.htm](http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd25.htm)
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid
- <sup>48</sup> Ibid
- <sup>49</sup> Ray, Robert, 'Peacekeeping and Peacemaking – The Challenge for the Future', in Smith, (1993), pp. 169 – 170.
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid. p. 172.
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>52</sup> Parliament of Australia, Senate Hansard, 6/9/93, p. 920.
- <sup>53</sup> The cornerstone of Evans' campaign was his book *Cooperating for Peace: The Global Agenda for the 1990s and Beyond*, St. Leonards, Allen and Unwin, 1993.
- <sup>54</sup> Gill, Peter, 'Tax Air Travel For UN Troops: Evans', *Australian Financial Review*, 28/9/93.
- <sup>55</sup> Parliament of Australia, 1994, Senate Hansard, 5/5/94, page 330, speaker: Evans, Senator Gareth.
- <sup>56</sup> Parliament of Australia, Senate Hansard, 30/08/94, page 557.
- <sup>57</sup> Londey (2004) p. 199
- <sup>58</sup> Ibid. p. 201
- <sup>59</sup> McCarthy, Anne-Marie, 'Agencies Plead For Urgent Refugee Aid', *The Age*, 21/7/94.
- <sup>60</sup> Baker, Mark, 'Canberra Under Attack Over Aid Commitment', *The Age*. 22/7/94
- <sup>61</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>62</sup> Keating, Paul, *Emergency relief for Rwanda*, Press Release from the Office of the Prime Minister, 25/07/94. Accessed online at [http://parlinfoweb.aph.gov.au/piweb/view\\_document.aspx?id=16378&table=PRESSREL](http://parlinfoweb.aph.gov.au/piweb/view_document.aspx?id=16378&table=PRESSREL)
- <sup>63</sup> Ibid
- <sup>64</sup> McIntosh, Patrick, 'Experiences of Command in UN Operations', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute of Australia*, vol. 20, December 1999, p.29.
- <sup>65</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>66</sup> According to another soldier on that trip, Colonel Wayne Ramsey, this journey commenced on 4 July 1994. (i.e. Virtually the moment that Kigali fell to the RPF.) About seven days later they returned to Australia, having visited Kigali, London and UN HQ in New York.
- <sup>67</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, 2004, Interview with Pat McIntosh, transcript from *The Australians at War Film Archive*, tape 5, time code. 00.30 – 13.00, (2004), available at <http://www.australiansatwarfilmarchive.gov.au/aawfa/interviews/710.aspx>
- <sup>68</sup> The actual mix of the force would be 110 riflemen (A Coy., 2/4 Battalion RAR), 111 medical staff from various units (including doctors, nurses, surgeons, dentists, pharmacists and laboratory technicians), 60 logistics support personnel, 25 headquarters staff and another 5 personnel attached as liaison to the UNAMIR HQ.

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- <sup>69</sup> *The Australians at War Film Archive*, Interview with Pat McIntosh, tape 5, time code 14.30 -16.30.
- <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* tape 5, time code 18.30 - 28.00.
- <sup>71</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, Interview with Wayne Ramsey, transcript from *The Australians at War Film Archive*, tape 6, time code 02.00, (2004), available at <http://www.australiansatwarfilmarchive.gov.au/aawfa/interviews/710.aspx>
- <sup>72</sup> Commonwealth Of Australia, 2000, Official Committee Hansard, Joint Standing Committee On Foreign Affairs, Defence And Trade (Defence Subcommittee), *The Suitability Of The Australian Army For Peacetime, Peacekeeping And War*, 17/03/00, Transcript: Mcintosh, Brigadier Patrick Francis, p. 255
- <sup>73</sup> *The Australians at War Film Archive*, Interview with Wayne Ramsey., tape 9, time code 09.00 (2004)
- <sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, tape 6, time code 03.00.
- <sup>75</sup> *The Australians at War Film Archive* Interview with Pat McIntosh, tape 6, time code 7.00 (2004)
- <sup>76</sup> McIntosh, 'Experiences of Command in UN Operations', p.31.
- <sup>77</sup> Londey (2004) p. 202
- <sup>78</sup> Wright, Beverly, 1998, *Out of Africa*, (web page) viewed <http://www.anzacday.org.au/history/peacekeeping/anecdotes/rwanda01.html>
- <sup>79</sup> McIntosh, 'Experiences of Command in UN Operations', pp. 30-31.
- <sup>80</sup> *Ibid.* p.31
- <sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.
- <sup>82</sup> Jordan, Paul, 'Witness to Genocide -- A Personal Account of the 1995 Kibeho Massacre', *Australian Army Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2003 p. 131
- <sup>83</sup> For their actions on this day four soldiers were awarded the Medal for Gallantry – Cpl. A. Miller, WO2 Rod Scott, Lt. T. Tilbrook, and Maj. Carol Vaughan-Evans. These were the first gallantry awards to Australians since the Vietnam War.
- <sup>84</sup> Warfe, Peter, 'Post-traumatic stress and the Australian Defence Force: lessons from peace operations in Rwanda and Lebanon', in Evans, Michael and Ryan, Allan (eds.), *The Human Face of Warfare*, St Leonards, Allen & Unwin, 2000, pp. 84-96.