

AMBUSH IN MOGADISHU

Interview Captain Haad

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He was one of the sector commanders for General Aidid's militia in Mogadishu on October 3rd, 1993. He had 30 militiamen under his authority that day. He received military training in Libya and has had 10 years of fighting experience.

After the July 12th attack on the house of Aidid, what was the feeling of the military of the SNA?

You can understand the feelings of people who have been brutally attacked, and, we gave the reply of people to whose country some people came for humanitarian reasons, but instead of that humanitarian reasons, they were giving fierce attacks. And we gave the appropriate answer.

When did you realize that the Americans had brought special forces, Rangers, Delta Force here to Mogadishu?

My feeling towards American what we thought the American and what they proved to be completely different. Even so we would not have acted in the way Americans acted.

We knew that immediately after their arrival because we were in all the places where they would have arrived, say in the port, airport, the American compound, some people of us were always there, and the minute they arrived we knew that they were there. And after a very short their own radios announced the arrival of these special forces.

Did you develop a special strategy for dealing with special forces?

We had the highest order of the military training and what also was giving us assistance is the nature of our land and our environment, which we knew very well.

How much experience do you have of fighting?

Military operation studies experience of 10 years.

The Rangers started making attempts to capture General Aidid, using the same tactics six times before the battle of October 3rd. How did you evaluate a strategy for dealing with this?

I was the military commander of a sector of the Somali militia, and as such I was not allowed to know the place where Aidid was at any given moment. When he needed us at a special location, he used to come to a place and whenever we finished our meeting he would go back and we never knew where he was going. During the period when the war was going on, all the security bodyguards who were guarding General Aidid were completely changed and new security guards were allocated to him.

I understand how General Aidid was hidden, what I don't understand is how did the SNA plan to respond to these snatch and grab operations?

We knew that the forces, UN forces at that time, were too many for us to face. What we did is to concentrate our attacks on the Americans, and the forces who were taking their order directly from the Americans, such as the Pakistanis. And we had some understanding with the other forces not to attack us and that we would not attack them.

This is what the Americans were saying, they were saying that the Italians had a deal with General Aidid, with the SNA, is this true?

I'm not sure of any agreement as such but we were on friendly terms with the Italians. We understood that the Italians were not happy about the Americans operating so much force on us.

Was the battle of October the 3rd a trap for the Americans.

No, it wasn't.

How long did it take you to respond once you realized that helicopter troops were coming down to the building?

As soon as the aircrafts took off from the air bases we immediately knew.

But the Americans were trying to confuse the Somalis, they would take off quite often and fly around the city and make no attack or they'd fly to the fishing village nearby. How did you realize on October 3rd that there was really going to be an attack?

We do not know that they were specifically attacking that house of Adbi Awaleh, but we knew that when they were taking off from their bases, they were men seriously going to attack on a special place. We knew that because there were people informing us at the place where they were taking off. And they told us that forces took off and they were very serious, they are going to attack a particular place.

The aircrafts when they took off from their bases they followed that tiny route. At that particular time I was in a place about one kilometer from the house they were attacking, and luckily it was the only time where our militias were on their highest alert. Fortunately if they attacked us there at 12 o'clock in midday, it may be that many of our militias were still lying in their beds. And if they attacked us some time in, say, 5 o'clock, it might be that most of our militias have dispersed.

And at that particular day on that particular hour... we saw the aircrafts flying over us. As soon as we saw them flying over us, we started firing at them immediately because they were flying on a very low level. They responded to the fire and troops from two aircrafts descended into the house.... There were about twelve militia men guarding the house at that time, and they were some of the most trained militia men we had. And they started fighting them. Each of those militia men was taking cover from the aircrafts in the manner which we're accustomed to take cover from the aircrafts. The easiest way to take cover from an aircraft is to have a piece of sheet over the person and he fires from under the sheet of cloth. If necessary two small boys or two women used to stretch the piece of cloth over the militia men. And immediately

afterwards all the people in the neighborhood took their guns and participated in the fight because the area was one of the largest markets in Mogadishu, and there were many people having their properties there.

Why did this happen? Why were the civilians as well as the militias ready to fight against the Americans?

Almost all Somalis know how to fire a gun and almost all of them know how to fight. They have their training from the civil war experience.

Even women were participating; the American soldiers say that there was one woman with a baby in one arm and a pistol in the other. Why?

That is because women and children were told that foreign forces invaded their soil, their country and that their most beloved leader Aidid is being searched for.

Did you receive any foreign help?

Yes.

The Americans say that it wasn't the Somalis who shot down their helicopters, it was people from Iran or from Qaddafi. Is this true or not?

Americans have many adversaries in the world, and as such we might have received weapons from those people who don't like the Americans. But the men actually firing the guns were the Somalis. Two years prior to that war I had my training in Libya. and almost all our militia, most of them are trained either in Libya or in other Islamic countries and previous to that, the education which we received in Somali military academy was in an American system.

And before that in the Russian system.

The people of the age of Aidid and other old generals received their training in Russia.

Why do you think that the Americans underestimated the Somali fighters? Did they understand the military capability of the SNA?

They knew our capability because it was our depot where they first attacked when they arrived. We were expecting the Americans to arrive in one of two ways; one way was to capture the whole country, all Somalia, or to confine themselves to provision of humanitarian aid to people. We were expecting them to do one of these two functions. At that time we were ready to give up all our arms if the Americans and other UNITAF forces were themselves ready to disarm all the Somali people. If they disarmed all the people in the whole country and even if they told Aidid that he would not become a president of Somalia, we would have been satisfied. The only thing that we needed at that time was peace, so if he was going to provide the peace, we would have been very happy. They didn't confine themselves to the humanitarian aspect of the mission, and they didn't declare war on Somali people. They concentrated on themselves, on fighting one special clan of all the Somalis. Even though there are so many clans in Southern Somalia they were only after one particular clan.

Before the arrival of UNITAF forces there was a contingent of Pakistanis, about 500 troops at the airport. Their security was undertaken by SNA militia men headed by myself. There was an understanding that they should guard the humanitarian provisions, to apportion those provisions to Somali clans equally. At first when the Americans forces arrived, we were on friendly basis, they gave us, you know, some projects contracts, they rented some houses from us. But afterwards they told us that "you are of the same tribe of General Aidid, you go out, we don't want to see you."

At times there were vehicles belonging to say Osman Atto, and other prominent Habr Gidr people. Those vehicles were told to go out of the American compound, and as such we became convinced that this American troop came to fight Havergeer specifically. And I remember one day, a man called Boteng, he was a UNOSOM transport officer, he called us and he said, "All of you, all of Habr Gidr men who have vehicles here should take their vehicles out of the compound." I took my vehicle out of their compound. And then we lost confidence in the Americans from that moment.

Let's go back to October 3rd. The 12 militia men outside [the] building fire back at the soldiers as they arrive.

When does Captain Haad and his soldiers come to the battle and where do they start fighting?

In about 2 minutes. While I was going to the battle I had a radio. I spoke to Aidid and asked them for permission to go into the war and I was given the permission, and then we started it. And when I was given the order to fight I immediately took 30 militia into the place. I sent the car back and it brought more from other adjacent places.

What position were you in? How close to the Olympic Hotel?

I didn't come from the direction of Olympic Hotel, but I came from the direction of that road which is known as the 30 Road. Then we immediately called women in the neighborhood to spread sheets above us. They did so, and we started firing at the Americans. While we were engaged in the fight with those Americans who descended from the plane, we were informed that there were reinforcements coming for the Americans. Then we immediately started to erect barricades for the convoys. When those convoy arrived we started fighting them.

Was this the convoy which [the] prisoners were in?

Yeah, it was the same convoy that took the prisoners out of the [hotel].

What was the composition of the convoys, humvees, five-ton trucks?

They were composed of one big truck... and five other humvees. The convoy wanted to go back to, into the place, into the same road from which they came, but we have already blocked their exit. And they went by another route. And the reason for their going out was that we let them do so. Because we knew, we were told by a person that the elders are on those convoys.... We gave safe passage for the convoy that were carrying the prisoners. And while they were going in that convoy, the Americans, we saw many of our men in their captivity being held as a shield against the bullets being fired from by the Somalis. They have guns through the 30 road and we hit the last two of the convoy. At that point the

situation was very tense. After about one hour the first aircraft was hit.

What happened after it came down?

We hit two cars from the convoy, and the troops who were on those cars were standing just near the place, and at that particular moment, the first aircraft was hit in a place which was not far from where the these two cars have been hit. Those troops whose two vehicles were destroyed ran towards the place where the aircraft came down, and all the other vehicles of the convoy left. Those troops in the convoy were firing in all direction killing people indiscriminately. When I was fighting on the ground, I was given another order to direct our fighting in the direction of helicopters. If it were not for the helicopters all the infantry troops of the Americans would have been easily killed. But we were concentrating our fight on the aircrafts and they took that opportunity to run into the houses where the helicopter was downed.

The first aircraft was hit, roughly at about one hour after the fight. The second one was hit about 5 o'clock. That might be one hour after the first.

Describe what the Little Bird helicopters were doing.

They started their fight around 6 o'clock in the evening. At first Black Hawk and Cobra were the ones we were fighting, and two communication aircrafts. At the 6 o'clock in the evening, we cordoned off the area where the Americans were. It was a fist to fist war, very heavy fight, when was the decision made to allow the convoy of Americans to leave. That was at the time when we defeated the Malaysian [and Pakistani] forces completely. It was 5 o'clock in the morning when they were given free passage.

In the evening we came to know that the Pakistanis refused to take part in the fight. And then we decided to fire the mortars in the places where the Americans were taking cover. After 6 o'clock in the evening, Aidid was going round and round the place where the party was taken. While we were about to start shelling them with mortars, we received order from Aidid not to shell them. At first our intention was to bombard an area of about 20 houses, but it was reported that the Americans were in 6 of them only. So if we tried to

bombard them with mortars, a mortar might go astray and kill people in some other places. All the people in the neighborhood were entreating us not to shell these people because they had more than 200 people in their captivity. So people said please don't shell them, you make an other solution. But we as militia commanders would have been happy if we had bombarded them at that time it was. About 12 o'clock midnight, the Americans were trying to drop munitions in for the American troops on the ground, and we snatched those from them and started fighting them with their own ammunition. And if you ask me about their endurance it is very surprising, for troops being fed from the air with biscuits.

What is Captain Haad's professional assessment of the training, moral, equipment and the motivation of the American soldiers?

I think that their training was not for people who were expected to be engaged in a fight that will take a long time. I think that their training was for some surgical operation. They were just shooting indiscriminately, sometimes they were not aiming at any particular person or militia man, they were just spraying bullets. But they were good in tactics, like jumping, taking cover, and all these things. But otherwise I think their training was for a man who would fight for a very short time in a some special surgical operation.

What were Captain Haad's personal feelings about the battle and also about the American involvement in Somalia?

My feeling about the battle was that it was a right fight, an obligation. But my feeling towards Americans is that what we thought the Americans were and what they proved to be were completely different. Even small boys would not have acted in the way the Americans acted.

Why did people drag the dead bodies of the Americans in the streets the next day?

There were more American bodies that were buried than the single body that was dragged. A person who's father was killed, don't you expect him to drag a dead body? If a person gets very angry he wants to vent his anger, he wants something to have all his anger accrued on. We as militia did

our part of the fighting through the bullets, those people who were dragging the bodies were only small children and women, and that was their way of expressing their anger. Wouldn't you be very sorry about 73 of our elder men, of our religious leaders, of our most prominent people, having their bodies mutilated -- we collected parts of their bodies from the building in which they were attacked -- if you were a son of one of those people killed on that day, what would be your situation, how would you feel?

How many people died, civilian and military, on the Somali side on October 3rd?

The exact number of militia men who died on that day is 133, 74 with special training.

And civilian casualties?

That's almost uncountable, because the place where the fire took place is one of the busiest sectors of Mogadishu and people were not even taking cover. Each bullet fired in one direction might have killed four or five or six persons, because the place is very populous.

Do you realize the Rangers were not under United Nations' command?

The Somalis still like the Americans as people. The Americans were arrogant, very arrogant, and that arrogance made them blind of the fact that they should consult us in their operations. He says that if the Americans had good experience of what had happened so far, we expect to be friends with them, in all aspects, politically, economically, all aspects of life, because the America is the most powerful nation on earth.