

U.S. soldiers facing unpredictable conditions

MOGADISHU, Somalia — Andy Milburn's foot patrol turned left at Death Bridge into the Bermuda Triangle, trailing a wake of laughing kids. Then a single shot sent them scrambling for cover.

The 12 Marines crouched in a line behind a low white stucco wall peering into Indian Country, their corner of the bombed-out, starving, clan-ruled and grotesquely complex ruins of Somalia.

Up close, the Marines saw that to deliver food, they would have to pacify Somalia. Some of them wondered whether they had taken on more than they had reckoned.

"It's hard to define a clear mission," said Milburn, a U.S. Marine lieutenant. "Our rules of engagement change by the day."

His job Sunday was to take a section of men into the worst part of town — an enclave the South Mogadishu warlord left to northerners — "to act friendly and show some force."

The section left their base at Mogadishu in high spirits.

"This isn't a war movie," Milburn barked at one man who seemed overly relaxed. "Get both hands on that weapon."

For a while, there were smiles on all sides. "Welcome, welcome," Somali market women and youngsters

chanted as the Marines strode down a busy street.

Some Somalis, fed up with the chaotic rule by armed gangs, yelled encouragement: "Get the guns from those bandits."

Then the men, sweating in their camouflage, headed for Death Bridge, a short white span named for recent mayhem.

They walked through an ominous canyon of tin shacks rising on both sides, dotted among forests of long-spined pear cactus.

Then Osman Hussein, 15, tugged at Milburn's sleeve. "Guns," he said.

Milburn followed the boy's finger to a bank of whitewashed houses over the bridge. A shot cracked. "Get down," the lieutenant yelled, and everyone did.

"I don't want to be overdramatic, but that kid probably saved my point man's life," Milburn said. "We were going over that bridge and would have walked right into it."

The patrol moved on. Then the radio ordered them back. It wasn't because of the incident but rather some communications problem.

Such regular foot patrols show the flag, but they also remind the Marines what the U.S.-led U.N. forces are up against on a grander scale.

"We're so vulnerable, if they want

to take shots at us, what can we do?" said Gunnery Sgt. Robin White from Indianapolis.

At night, snipers fire into the port camp. Marines cleaned out the roof of the old prison, a convenient overlook, and shots diminished. But the danger is there.

Already, Somalis on the street curse French Foreign Legionnaires who they say are too rough. The French shot dead two Somalis Friday when their truck's brakes failed at a roadblock.

Military officers acknowledge that as time moves on, more disgruntled people in this volatile society could make life miserable for armed troops and all other foreigners.

On an earlier patrol, Milburn seized an assault rifle from a Somali, and the crowd cheered. A half hour later, the man sent a friend to the port to demand it back.

Milburn received orders to hand back the weapon since the owner argued he needed it for self-defense. Two hours later, the man used the gun to rob a Swedish cameraman.

"The guy made the Swede lay down and threatened to kill him," White said. "He kept screaming that he was getting back at the Marines who took his weapon. This is complex. Big-time."

Food shipment, troops arrive

MOGADISHU, Somalia — Under U.S. Marine guard, the first food relief ship in eight weeks docked Sunday at Mogadishu, and American troops extended their operations.

It was a busy day for the Marines, but it still did not bring them to the areas where hundreds of people are dying of starvation and disease each week. And there were signs of the tough job ahead, including continued violence by clan gunmen.

Cynthia Osterman, a CARE International spokeswoman, estimated that 350,000 people have died in Somalia this year and that 1 million to 2 million are endangered. The last estimate of deaths, more than a month ago, was 300,000.

Ms. Osterman said the major problem was moving food into the countryside, where the U.S. forces have yet to deploy in large numbers.

"It's very tough to deliver. The roads are very bad, some mined," she said.

In the capital, Marines escorted food convoys to both sides of the divided city and relief officials worked to restore water service to Mogadishu for the first time in two years.

The arrival of the first U.S. Army soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum, N.Y., and Belgian and Italian soldiers brought the number of troops to about 4,000.

More than 30,000 troops will eventually participate in the U.S.-led UN coalition.

In the capital, scattered shots still rang out on Sunday, and looters were preying on the cars of relief workers, despite a cease-fire agreement announced last week by the two main warlords, Ali Mahdi Mohamed and Gen. Mohamed Farrah Aidid. The truce was supposed to have taken effect Sunday.

Minnesota residents rally against state-licensed home of molester

WELCH, Minn. — The sign on the gravel road winding through the wooded hills of Ravenna Township cautions motorists to watch for children. But children don't walk the road alone.

Another roadside sign, this one hand-drawn with an arrow pointing to a nearby house, gives the reason: "A child molester lives here!"

Twice a day for almost eight months, residents have protested outside Ravenna Ranch, where Peter G. Anderson, one of four developmentally-disabled tenants, lives.

They have sued to close the state-licensed home, and face two lawsuits themselves, one accusing them of harassing residents and workers at the home, the other seeking legal costs, which amount to more than \$77,000.

"The issue is not over mental retardation, it's an issue over sexual offenders being moved into a neighborhood full of kids without the knowledge of residents," said Tim Hoffman, who lives across the road with his wife and their 4-year-old son.

Anderson, 37, is on probation for a 1986 conviction for exposing himself

to a 9-year-old boy. Before that, he had been placed on probation for sexually assaulting girls, aged 6 and 9.

Neighbors learned that Anderson had moved into the home only when he was spotted by the girls' mother.

Now the area is dotted with hand-lettered signs, which read "Warning: We protect our children."

The Hoffmans and another couple sued in February, seeking to have the home closed. The case is scheduled for trial Thursday.

David Peterman, co-owner of Thomas Allen Inc., which operates the home, argues that its residents shouldn't be held to a different standard than anyone else.

"When you or I move into a new house or apartment, we do not ask the neighbors for their approval," Peterman said.

"As long as an individual resides within the law, neighbors do not have the right to decide who does and does not live next to them."

Mara Thompson, an attorney for Thomas Allen, argued at a March hearing that neighbors wrongly as-

sume Anderson cannot be rehabilitated and that he requires constant supervision.

Anderson was placed at Ravenna Ranch under a contract with the county.

Still, neighbors are frightened. "None of the people responsible could answer our questions about the level of risk," said Curt Weber, who lives behind the home. "That's a worrisome issue to me because I don't know. Someone's got to look out for these kids."

While neighbors battle Ravenna Ranch, which is 35 miles southeast of St. Paul, advocates for the disabled have taken up the cause of the home's residents, filing a lawsuit against the neighbors that contends the protests have destroyed the privacy of the men living in the home.

"They have the right to be free from intimidation and interference in the home they are living in," said Luther Granquist, deputy director of the Minnesota Disability Law Center.

Peterman says protesters have fired guns into the air, chanted, played loud music and harassed residents and staff.

After coastal storm, victims ponder future

In the calm Sunday that followed a lethal storm that tore apart seaside homes, put city streets under water and buried wide regions of the Northeast in snow, those hardest hit pondered what to do next.

"It's wide devastation the entire length of New Jersey," said Stephen Kempf, Jr., the New York City-based regional director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. "It's going to take a while to clean up."

At least 17 deaths were blamed on the storm that hit New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York and parts of other Eastern states Thursday and lasted well into Friday.

Winds, rain and snow acted up again Saturday in spots and thousands

of people remained without power Sunday. Some who fled to shelters stayed there.

"I've lost everything and I've got two children," Sherlyn Gandy told New Jersey Gov. Jim Florio at a school which is being used as a shelter in Atlantic City, N.J. "I'm trying to find somewhere to live."

Her husband, Claude, asked where the family would go if the school reopened on Monday.

"We can assure you you are not going to be put out on the street," Mayor James Whelan said. He added that shelters would be available.

"That's the real personal, heart-wrenching part of this," Florio said. The storm dumped up to four feet of

snow on western and central Massachusetts and pounded coastal areas with high wind and rain Friday and Saturday.

Sea walls in coastal cities crumbled and winds, heavy snow and fallen trees downed power lines everywhere. Crews came from as far away as Canada to help restore power. About 1,000 National Guardsmen also assisted in the cleanup.

It was too soon for overall preliminary damage estimates, but damage to boardwalks and beaches in Atlantic City alone were estimated at \$10.7 million or more. The figure doesn't include damage to homes and businesses.

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