

Indian Contingent UNOSOM II 1992-94

v.1.0 June 29, 2006

Mandeep Singh Bajwa

Editor's Note: The Indian contingent from the start realized that clan loyalties predominated and it undertook no important task without clan consent. Despite this, 12 soldiers were killed in clashes with clans. When the clans turned belligerent, India decided to withdraw its troops, starting December 1994. The US had already departed Somalia.

The Indian Army was rightfully proud of its highly professional conduct. It also pronounced itself high satisfied with its low-key approach emphasising negotiation and humanitarian action, as opposed to the aggressive approach followed by western countries. Specifically, the Indian note civilian casualties in their AOR were the lowest for any contingent in Somalia

Nonetheless, since the clans were the source of the problem, it is legitimate to ask what exactly the mission achieved in larger terms. The mission was one of peacemaking, not peacekeeping. In that context, the Indian deployment was a political failure.

But there is no blame or disgrace in this: the US, which originated the intervention, failed in spectacular fashion. As such, the 15,000 troop lightly armed UN mission could hardly be expected to succeed. If failure was preordained because the US lacked the political will to destroy the clan militias, in retrospect the Indian mission did have the virtue of minimizing civilian losses. And, of course, there is no doubt if the Indian mission's mandate had been to fight the clans, it would have so done.

HQ 66 (I) Inf Bde Gp ex-20 Mtn Div (Brigadier "Mono" M.P. Bhagat)

4600 troops.

Somalia HQ at Baidoa

Independent AOR of 173,000 square km; took over from French.

5 Mahar

2 Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry

1 Bihar

3 Mechanized Infantry Regiment

1(I) Armd Sqn (7 Cav) (T-72 tanks)

1822 Lt Bty (120mm mortar)

176 Field Company (Bengal Sappers) (ex-235 Engineer Regiment)

Including 1 troop trawl tanks

6th Reconnaissance & Observation Flight (helicopters)

111 Helicopter Unit (Indian Air Force)

2 Mi-24 attack helicopters

9 officers

22 enlisted

3 non-combatants (enrolled)¹
4 vehicles

1 x Field Ambulance

5 Mahar lost 7 men including a Junior Commissioned Officer in a militia ambush. Three soldier of the field ambulance were killed in another incident.

Note

Intriguingly, the Indian contingent somehow acquired two M-113 APCs, an item not in the Army's inventory. For a photograph, see <http://www.bharat-rakshak.com/LAND-FORCES/Army/Images2/0532.jpg>

¹ In the Indian military these men perform civil trades such as barber and washerman.