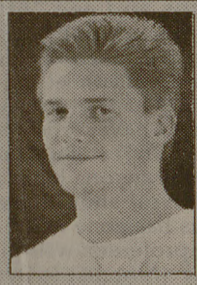


Don't forget the soldiers' loved ones Beyond headlines, photographs lie grieving families

With all of the recent reports of violence coming out of Somalia, the American public has seen and heard many reports of American casualties and prisoners of war.



ROB CLARK
Copy editor

Here at A&M, most of us really aren't affected personally by the events in Somalia. We hear of soldiers dying and think, "How terrible," and usually don't give it another thought.

But does it end there? Isn't there more than what the Associated Press tells us?

Where I am from, Fort Campbell, Ky., the Somalia situation dominates not only the news, but a whole community of family and friends of those involved.

Fort Campbell is an Army post located near the border of Kentucky and Tennessee. It is the home of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). It is a post rich with history from past battles and wars.

Six soldiers from Fort Campbell were killed in Somalia.

Two Fort Campbell soldiers were killed when their Black Hawk helicopter was shot down. There were reports of the Somalia triumphantly picking up pieces of the wreckage.

Chief Warrant Officer Mike Durant, the captured soldier we've seen on television recently, is also from Fort Campbell, with the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment.

Six dead soldiers from one Army post.

Fort Campbell has suffered more casualties in Somalia than it did during the entire Gulf War.

My father, Col. Robert T. Clark, is the chief of staff at Fort Campbell. He told me that despite the setbacks, the community has rallied around the post with help from the surrounding cities, family support groups and outsiders.

"There has been a tremendous outpouring of sympathy from the American people," he said.

As for the troops themselves, he said, "The soldiers here and in Somalia have a very high morale. We are a very professional, highly-trained army — the best army in the world."

A soldier's life is far from an easy one. To dedicate one's life to defending one's country is the epitome of nobility. And soldiers dying for their country should be revered.

Six soldiers dead. You may hear that on CNN, but that can't touch the magnitude of the horrible reality of the situation.

One of the most disturbing images of the Somalia conflict is the Associated Press photograph of a dead, unidentified soldier being dragged with ropes by Somalis.

The soldier shown, although unidentified, gave up his life for his country. To see such disrespect for this by the Somalis has haunted me ever since I saw it. And the fact that the soldier has a family somewhere makes it that much worse.

"It could be someone's father, husband or son," my father said. "A soldier who is killed in battle dies an honorable man, so to see the body dragged through the streets of Mogadishu arouses great anger and frustration."

Maj. Gen. Jack Keane, the commanding general of the 101st at Fort Campbell,

said in a news release that the troops' resolve is unshaken.

"If the Somalis think they are going to weaken the morale of the American soldier, they're dead wrong," Keane said. "We're all outraged by the performance of the Somalis and the way they are treating our dead, and we're not going to stand for that."

Keane was at Fort Sam Houston on Thursday to visit two survivors from the Black Hawk crash and decorate them with Purple Heart medals.

Although my father has not been deployed to Somalia, I do know how the families of deployed soldiers feel. When I was a senior in high school, my father was in the middle of Desert Storm. It's a wonder I graduated from high school at all.

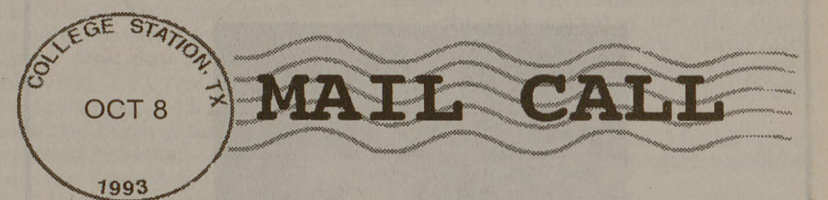
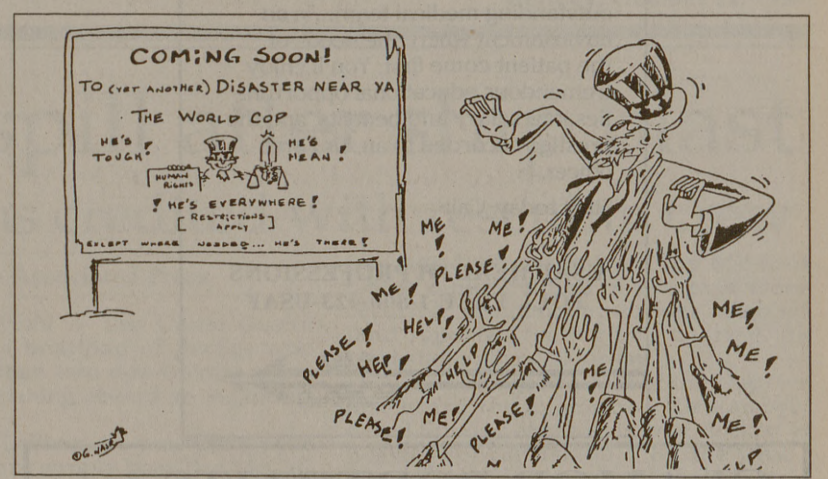
The fact that my family never really knew where he was, what he was doing and if he was safe was maddening. And while we were so proud, we were always frightened of the horrible possibilities of war.

It's that same fear that I can't get out of my mind when I see that damn picture of the dead soldier. Somewhere, a family is dealing with the terrible reality of what my worst fears were.

But my family was lucky. I never had to actually confront the fears that tormented us during the war, because my father returned home safely. But that doesn't mean I have forgotten.

So when you read about another killed soldier, please realize how much more than that it really is. Don't forget about the wives and children that are affected by this and the memory the soldiers leave behind.

Rob Clark is a sophomore journalism major



Nothing to be gained in Somalia

I am writing this letter to express my outrage and frustration over the Somalia issue. I am a former U.S. Army infantry soldier with five years service. My tour of duty includes one year in Korea along the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), as well as various posts in the United States.

My outrage comes over the viewing of the dead American soldier being dragged by cheering Somalis. Are these people the people we are supposed to protect and feed? I understand innocent Somalis have been killed, but far more have been saved by the United Nations' relief effort.

Secondly, my frustration is with the politicians, both Democrat and Republican. I feel nothing more can be gained by the U.S.-U.N. presence in Somalia. I realize a withdrawal will not happen over night and there are many political implications involved, but we are just biding our time until more lives will be wasted.

Lastly, it is my old unit, the 24th Infantry Division, that is sending the relief troops to bolster our soldiers already there. I left Fort Stewart 36 days ago to pursue an education at Texas A&M University. Sometimes, I wish I were still with them.

Willard Johnson
Class of '95

Get job done or get the heck out

The recent acts of Clinton have made my blood boil. The national defense budget is being diced and sliced to pieces, military bases are being closed routinely and yet our president's putting or American troops in increasingly dangerous combat positions.

I was swept by a wave of nausea when I saw pictures of a U.S. military man being held hostage by Somali rebels. I was even more sickened to see the corpse of a U.S. soldier being dragged throughout the streets of Mogadishu by a rope tied to his genitals!

It is time for Clinton to put up or shut up. If we really wanted to, we could go in and wipe out Mohammed Aidid without breaking a sweat. However, if Clinton wants to withdraw rather than risk U.S. lives, I say get the heck out.

I am incensed that a draft dodger such as Clinton is trying to flex his military muscle at the expense of American lives. The mission in Somalia has gotten out of hand.

At least if George Bush were president he would have enough guts to retaliate swiftly or enough sense to get out of Vietnam — I mean Somalia.

Thomas Wood
Class of '94

Somalia testing New World Order

As I write this letter, a brother of a friend lies seriously wounded in a Mogadishu hospital. I helped put him there since I supported the original humanitarian mission and its extension to nation building. I will pray for him and all the other Rangers.

The United States should not withdraw from Somalia. The U.S.-U.N. has already achieved much in that country, and the fighting in southern Mogadishu should not obscure that.

The goal of the mission should be the restoration of statehood to Somalia starting from local town governance and working up.

We need to review the means of achieving that mission without abandoning it. If Aidid has the support of his clan, so be it. If he gives up his weapons, let him be a part of the political process.

Somalia is a test case of the New World Order. The French have called this a "right to intervene." Sovereignty and ideology are no longer sacred cows protecting massive human suffering. The U.N. has taken over a state that has collapsed. In Cambodia a similar process is proceeding despite opposition from the Khmer Rouge, and Japan is doing much of the work.

Our interest in Somalia is peace. With effort, patience and prayer, we can achieve it.

Michael Murray
Cyclotron Institute

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Four years of school more than enough

I was in the depths of the twilight zone. I had a huge test that I hadn't even started to study for, and I was a journalism student studying at A&M's medical library.



JENNIFER SMITH
Reporter

I had spent about 30 hours in A&M's medical library over the last ten days trying to cram five week's worth of studying down for my first round of tests.

And even on this, my last night at the medical library, I still felt like a fish out of water.

As I pulled out my music appreciation book, my neighbor pulled out his physiology of the human spleen book. As I pulled out my graphics book, he pulled out his biology of viruses book. You get the picture.

Since I hadn't opened my books before these pesky little tests popped up, I was in a major cram mode for the last two weeks.

The only reason I study at the medical library is because it is the only library on campus. Evans Library is nothing more than a social hangout, and anyone who has ever tried to study there is, well, out of luck.

Back to the twilight zone. Most of my medical library buddies — who were in the same seats every time I was there — probably thought I've got it easy being a journalism major.

What do journalism majors do anyway besides pester people, write lies, attend peace rallies and burn the flag?

Well, when I'm not out smoking my peace pipe, I'm working 25 hours a week at The Battalion and taking 13 hours of classes.

So, in the hierarchy of important things in my life, homework ranks pretty low. I'm getting practical experience at The Battalion, and my classes are all enjoyable to me. So what if they're easy?

But even I don't like getting bad grades, so I have to attempt to get a good grade the night before the test. I've been living like this since I came to A&M, and I've managed to keep a 3.0. All right, it's a 2.9, but it's getting up there.

Why do I do this to myself? Why do I deliberately force myself to pull an all-

After I told him I was totally sick of school and simply wanted to pursue my profession, he told me he is going to medical school.

Who's he kidding? Three to five more years of school! I'm barely surviving these four, and he's talking about more.

nighter to do decent on a test?

I don't know. Maybe I secretly believe it's fun. Or maybe I was just too busy writing stories, interviewing sources and having fun with my Battalion partners in crime.

Why should I care? I'm just a journalism major.

As I was walking downstairs to take the first of about 25 breaks I would be taking

during my cram session, I ran into an old high school buddy.

He told me he is indeed a medical major ... or is it pre-med, or biology science? I don't know. He's going to be a doctor, so that's good enough for me.

After I told him I was totally sick of school and simply wanted to pursue my profession as a newspaper woman, he told me he is going to medical school when he graduates in a few years.

Med school — who's he kidding? Three to five more years of school! I'm barely surviving these four, and he's talking about more.

No way. I'm going to work. So what if my starting salary when I graduate may only be one-millionth of his potential income? At least I'll be out of this one-horse town and doing what I love.

But I'll have to admit, I have prepared for graduate school — just in case I win the lottery and have money to burn on something I'm never going to use. I've already taken the GMAT and LSAT, and I will be taking the GRE in December.

But there is nothing on God's green Earth that could get me to take another two or three year's worth of classes.

Maybe later. For now I'm going to live the life of a young adult. I'll only be young once. School can wait.

After studying five hours for my music test that I should have been studying five weeks for, I was finally ready to crash.

I wish I could say I got a little teary-eyed when I left the medical library, but I didn't. I'll be back soon enough — or at least when my next round of tests begins.

Jennifer Smith is a senior journalism major

