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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

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INTERVIEWEE: Michael Kampman

INTERVIEWER: Michael Paré

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**Transcription of Interview Number 31D 6 KAMPMAN
Michael Kampman**

Interviewed 16 November, 2005

By Michael Paré

Canadian War Museum Oral History Program Interview with Mike Kampman recorded on 16 November, 2005 at Ottawa. Interviewed by Michael Paré. Tape 1, Side 1.

KAMPMAN: My name is Mike Kampman, K-A-M-P-M-A-N.

INTERVIEWER: We both signed the legal release, is that correct?

KAMPMAN: Yes. That's correct.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me something about yourself? Where and when were you born?

KAMPMAN: Sure. I'm a native of Victoria, British Columbia. I was born on the West Coast in 1959 and I spent most of my early life there. I joined the Canadian Armed Forces in 1978. I was sponsored through civilian university. I graduated from the University of Victoria in 1981 and went on to complete Armour Officer Training in Gagetown. From 1983 to 1986 I served in Germany in 4 Brigade with the Royal Canadian Dragoons. And then went on to serve on the staff of the Royal Military College until 1989 when I rejoined my regiment in Petawawa where I was the adjutant of the regiment until 1991 when I became the Officer Commanding A Squadron, Royal Canadian Dragoons.

INTERVIEWER: And was it with A Squadron that you were deployed to Somalia?

KAMPMAN: Yes. In fact, the deployment to Somalia came towards the end of my tour as a Squadron Commander with the regiment.

INTERVIEWER: Let's move on then to the Somalia operation. Could you describe the events leading up to your selection for the deployment?

KAMPMAN: Well, it's interesting because we – I guess I should back a little bit in terms of the history of the mission. The Airborne Regiment had been, in fact, preparing for another mission in early 1992 to – I'm trying to remember – it was someplace in Africa. It might have been Algiers or Libya or something like that. But in any case it was, I guess, the summer of 1992 when the Airborne Regiment was chosen for a peace keeping mission in Northern Somalia. And throughout the fall of 1992, the Airborne Regiment trained for the peace keeping mission and the Royal Canadian Dragoons was actually assigned the task by the Brigade Commander to run most of the evaluation exercise which took place in October. However, the situation changed in Somalia late in

the fall of 1992 and as a result the government decided to change the mission from a chapter 6 or from a chapter 6 to a chapter 7, I guess, mission. In any event as a result...

INTERVIEWER: Can you describe or can you explain the difference between a Chapter 6 and a Chapter 7 mission?

KAMPMAN: Now, I'm trying to get this straight in my mind now. Really, it is going from peacekeeping to peacemaking. So it's really an elevation in the use of force and as a result of the situation going from a UN – essentially a UN peacekeeping mission to a coalition-led peacemaking mission. The government decided to augment the force and the forces decided to augment the fire power of the battle group by adding an armoured squadron and a mortar platoon. And my squadron was the armoured squadron that was chosen to augment the battle group.

So early in December of 1992, I was informed by my CO that my squadron would be accompanying the battle group on operations and basically, as a result, we had two weeks to prepare for the mission whereas the rest of the mission had been preparing for almost six months.

INTERVIEWER: So this means that you really had no time for any special training for this mission?

KAMPMAN: No. In fact, because - I should add that A Squadron, in those days, in fact both of the so called tank squadrons in the regiment were, in fact, armed with Cougar armoured vehicle general purpose or AVGP vehicles. And the Cougars were not in a very good state of repair because there was always a shortage of spare parts. So, in fact, most of our couple of weeks that we did have for preparation were spent in getting the vehicles ready for operations. And, in fact, we had to salvage the other Cougar Squadron to get enough spare parts to get one squadron fully operational and get it ready to go overseas.

In addition we had a bunch of new equipment that was thrown at us at the last minute including prototype vehicles, for example, the Bison Armoured personal carriers, which had only just entered service at that time. We were the first unit to receive the ambulance and the maintenance repair team or MRT prototypes of those vehicles. So, and in fact, the ambulance literally came out of the Land Engineering Test Establishment or LETE in Cumberland; literally came from LETE to our unit lines to get ready to go.

INTERVIEWER: So you had two weeks in which to prepare the vehicles for shipment and to receive these new vehicles and get those ones which were not runners into operational condition?

KAMPMAN: Yah. And that was really, sort of, ninety percent of the work that we were doing. The rest was – we had some time, obviously, to do all those things you have to do before going on a mission. And for Somalia, that included a very extensive immunization program for the troops. And finally, we had, I think my squadron – we

actually had one day of operational training and that was not with the rest of the battle group; that was just ourselves going out in the training area and before we were going to deploy. But the odd thing was that because the rest of the battle group had been preparing for a peacekeeping mission and, in fact, the battle group's equipment and vehicles had already been shipped prior to the change of the mission. So in fact, all of the vehicles and two of the three commandoes were mounted in Grizzly Armoured Personnel Carriers the APC version of the AVGP; all those vehicles were actually at sea when the mission changed.

INTERVIEWER: And they were heading for the Northern Somalia port for which the original mission...?

KAMPMAN: Yah, exactly. The original mission... Yah. They were assigned to go to the town of – or the original mission was to go to the town of Bossasso, which was in Northern Somalia. And that was the reason why all the vehicles were painted white. So all the vehicles were painted white. And, in fact, our vehicles were painted white even though we knew that we were not going on a peacekeeping mission. The decision was made to paint our vehicles white because all the rest of the battle group vehicles were painted white. [Laughs].

INTERVIEWER: In terms of briefings, what sort of operational briefings did you receive before the mission?

KAMPMAN: The only real briefing – the only real formal briefing that we got was the Intelligence briefing that was available at the time which was, in hindsight, actually pretty superficial. Really, the Intelligence community was only picking up sort of what was available in the open Press in terms of the relationship between the various rival factions in the civil war. And we also had a formal briefing by the JAG office on the rules of armed conflict and the Rules of Engagement as they were going to apply to the mission. And, in fact, it was interesting because – because these were – we received probably the most robust rules of engagement that had been issued to any mission up to that point, probably since Korea. And therefore there was a lot of emphasis on trying to get everybody on the same page in terms of interpreting what those rules of engagement meant. It was sort of that emphasis that was being put on the prep. But again, there wasn't a lot of time.

INTERVIEWER: What did you know about your actual mission and taskings before you left?

KAMPMAN: The actual task that was going to be given to the battle group was unknown before we left. We were in the midst of the deployment of the entire coalition force at that time. We knew where, basically, where we were going to start in the country. We were going to initially deploy to the abandoned Somalia Air force Base at Baledogle, which was just about fifty kilometers north of Mogadishu.

INTERVIEWER: Can you spell that?

KAMPMAN: B-A-L-E-D-O-G-L-E. Baledogle. But beyond that, we didn't know what we were going to do. We— there was a bit of a concept of ops from UNITAF. That's the United Task Force Headquarters which was, I believe, under the command of General – the American Lieutenant General Johnson – was, UNITAF had an initial concept of ops in terms of division of the coalition area into sectors. But how those sectors were going to be assigned and who was going to do what was unknown when we deployed to Somalia.

INTERVIEWER: Was the overall mission of UNITAF known to – well, to you, for example, or to others before you...?

KAMPMAN: We had a pretty good concept about what exactly the mission was about, really to establish security in the UNITAF sector. What we didn't know was the overall strategy for the operation in terms of what was the end state – you know, what was the concept for any type of a withdrawal afterwards. All of that was very grey when we deployed.

INTERVIEWER: Now, looking from a personal point of view, what sort of arrangements in this short time that you had to deploy did you take personally in terms of administrative, medical, arrangements with your family?

KAMPMAN: Well, I was, probably like most people – in fact, like all of the members of the squadron. It came so quickly that it was really almost a unique situation in that you didn't have a lot of time to, you know, go through a period where the family was trying to adjust to the fact that you were going on the mission. It was December. In fact, the squadron had been in the middle of preparations for a Northern Sovereignty Patrol exercise. And so....

INTERVIEWER: What a contrast!

KAMPMAN: Yah. What a contrast. So we were – and, in fact, I was actually supposed to go on the reconnaissance for that exercise a week after the point when I was actually warned we were going on the mission. So it was such a surprise. Plus the fact that Christmas was three weeks away and the usual – you know, you were in the midst of the usual pre-holiday festivities and so on. It was all such a shock. I don't think any of us really had a chance to think about implications for the family. I will say that back in those days – and we were still in such an early stage in terms of the changes and the types of missions that the Canadian Forces was going through – there was no family support network. We didn't have any family resource centers back in those days. There was a bit of a support organization being put together by the Airborne Regiment rear party, but that did not include the attachments to the battle group. So, in fact, my wife took on the responsibility – the almost traditional responsibility of the CO's wife of trying to set up a support network for the families of the squadron. And, in fact, at the end – by the end of the mission, she actually put together a hand book which she turned over to the base

which was actually used as a basis for developing procedures for family support by the base later on.

INTERVIEWER: I suppose it would have been help, too, because the rest of the regiment was still back in Petawawa, so there was some support from that...?

KAMPMAN: Well, in fact, again, because of the suddenness of change of grouping of the battle group, there was no real opportunity to develop any sort of cohesion within the battle group. So, my squadron was really never sort of brought into the family, and never even really welcomed into the family in terms of trying to form a larger support network. And on top of that, my own regiment was very much still focused on its own missions and what it was doing, you know, regular day to day training and so on. Really, the squadron was very much on its own. And it stayed that way throughout the mission.

INTERVIEWER: Now, you mentioned some new equipment that you received. What other sorts of changes did you have to make to your structure of the squadron and the equipment to prepare for this deployment?

KAMPMAN: Well, this was a particular concern of mine because, of course, in those days the Cougar, which had been acquired in the 1970's essentially as a training vehicle, and had been used as a training vehicle throughout the 1980's and into the 1990's. As a result, the Cougar squadrons were organized as tank squadrons. And all of the tactics that we used in training were tank tactics and therefore were not appropriate for the type of mission that we were about to go on. So, we had to basically re-design the squadron from scratch and not only re-design the squadron from scratch but, in fact, sort of re-orient all of our tactical thinking from scratch. Because the type of mission that we were about to go on was really more appropriate to a reconnaissance – to a heavily armed reconnaissance organization or an armoured cavalry – I guess the American Army would call it an armoured cavalry organization.

So, I literally sat down with my Sergeant Major and with the representatives of the Headquarters Squadron of the Regiment, and we designed a logistics tail of the squadron off of a piece of paper. Sort of thought our way through, based on a Brigade Reconnaissance Squadron but with some of the new vehicles and some of the new equipment that was becoming available. We basically designed an echelon from scratch on paper. Literally, within twenty-four hours, submitted that to the chain and that went right up to National Defence Headquarters. And basically that scrap of paper was used as a basis for allocating equipment on the fly. So, for example, we received the new Bison ambulances within forty-eight hours and some of the other vehicles shortly after that.

I actually asked for permission to re-design the fighting echelon organization before I deployed. And, in fact, my request was denied by the commanding officer because we were in the midst of trying to assign people to slots and he didn't think that we had enough time to basically re-assign crews. So that part of it, I actually changed once I got into theatre. And once I got into theatre, I actually re-organized the squadron from four troops of four Cougars to three troops of five Cougars which was a more robust

organization for doing the types of operations that we did. So, literally, we re-designed the entire organization of the sub-unit from scratch. And a large part of it, we made it up as we went.

INTERVIEWER: All in two weeks?

KAMPMAN: All in two weeks.

INTERVIEWER: Now, did the regiment have a reconnaissance squadron that could have been sent and if so why not?

KAMPMAN: The regiment had a reconnaissance squadron but the reconnaissance squadron back then was mounted in Lynx and the Lynx was not appropriate for the mission. The mission – because the rest of the battle group was mounted in AVGPs and because they particularly wanted the fire power of the Cougar with its seventy-six millimeter cannon - naturally they assigned it to one of the Cougar squadrons. But having said that, as I said, the Cougar squadron was not organized to do that kind of mission.

And it's interesting because we ran – throughout the 1990's, in the number of times we deployed Cougars on operations - and again it's important, I think, for people understand that the Cougar was never intended to go on operations. It was actually bought as a trainer and therefore we never bought, for example, sufficient spare parts to support operations and we never maintained the vehicle to a level that would be required to support operations. So, you know, despite all of these limitations, we continued to use that vehicle on operations all the way through the 1990s, in Croatia, in Bosnia, in Somalia. And so the organization that we actually created for Somalia was then adopted for later missions when we sent Cougar squadrons on operations.

INTERVIEWER: How about scales of ammunition? Did you have sufficient ammunition for the mission?

KAMPMAN: We had lots of ammunition. Again, it was one of those things where we sort of sat down and scratched our head. We looked at the NATO allocation – the standard NATO allocation of ammunition. But of course, again, because the Cougar was a trainer, there was no allocation of ammunition. There were no scales of ammunition for the Cougar. So we had to kind of make it up based on what we had used for tanks, what we'd used for Lynx. And as a result we depleted, significantly depleted, the stocks of training ammunition available in Canada for the Cougars. We had – I think what concerned us the most was that we had no real armour piercing round for the Cougar. We had a high explosive squash head which is a chemical energy round, so we had no real kinetic energy armour piercing round for the Cougar. And that concerned us because we were going up against – we knew that the Somalis had T-62s as well as T-54s and Centurions and some other various types, a couple of M-60 tanks and so on. So we were concerned, depending on what kind of armoured vehicles we were going to encounter,

whether we were going to be able to, you know, basically be able to go it against tanks that had 105 millimeter guns.

INTERVIEWER: Now in the end, you didn't run into those types of...?

KAMPMAN: Yes we did.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, you did. Well, we'll get to that later on.

KAMPMAN: Yah we did...

INTERVIEWER: What about personal equipment? Where there any changes that needed to be made for deployment to very, very hot...?

KAMPMAN: Yah. And again, all of this was going on the fly. Somebody decided that it would be a good idea if we tried out desert combats [laughs]. I guess they had been running some trials at NDHQ so they issued to members of the battle group what were essentially, I think, three different prototypes of a desert combat uniform. And what it was – it wasn't camouflage – it was a standard sort of sand khaki color, same design as the combats that we were wearing back then, but with different types of cloth. So the different prototypes had different weights of cloth. So at the same time that soldiers where trying to get themselves ready, they were issued these different uniforms. And they wouldn't tell you what kind of cloth it was. It was type A, type B or type C. So they decided that it would be a good idea to run a trial on a type of combat uniform without telling the soldiers what type they were getting [laughs].

INTERVIEWER: A blind trial?

KAMPMAN: Yah, a blind trial of a combat uniform at the same time as we were going into operations. On our side, what really worried me was that we had no fireproof uniform for the Cougar crews. I had the opportunity to talk to some of the guys in Ottawa and voice my concerns and as a result of that, they went out and did a single buy of US Army tank crew suits which were the NOMEX fireproof crew suits. And we were issued American NOMEX fireproof crew suits just prior to going on the mission, which was a great novelty for the crews to suddenly have these American tank suits. So, throughout the mission, we were able to wear the American fireproof tank suits which were a bit of a double-edged sword because although it was great – it gave you a level of confidence because you knew that your uniform was fireproof – they were bloody hot. They were very heavy material and it was warm.

So we had, you know, again, a lot of this new kit was being thrown at us. Another good example, global positioning systems. The hand held GPS and the vehicle mounted GPS had never been used in operations before. Obviously they had made a great impact in the first Gulf War where they had been really introduced in large numbers for the first time. So somebody got it in their bright mind that we should have them, too. So we were issued GPS receivers even as we were doing the final packing of the kit with no training

on how to use the GPS. So we actually ended up in theatre unpacking this stuff and teaching ourselves how to use the GPS.

We got new high frequency radios. Again, brand new stuff, single buy. They had to, in theatre actually, mount the equipment because they hadn't even figured out how to mount these things in the vehicles before the vehicles were packed and sent. So we ended up, in many cases, installing and training ourselves to use the kit when we were actually in theatre.

INTERVIEWER: How about personnel? Did the whole squadron go or were you augmented with people from outside the squadron?

KAMPMAN: We were – I was very lucky because, again, I had by December of 1992, I had been commanding the squadron for a year and a half. And in fact, from a personal perspective, the squadron had been pretty stable. I had also had the opportunity to take the squadron through the Ram's Head – the annual Ram's Head competition – which was the Armoured Corps gunnery competition in those days between the Cougar squadrons. So, not only had I commanded the squadron for a month and a half and had pretty stable crews, but I had taken the crews through some significant training in that period of time. So from a crew perspective – from a Cougar crew perspective – the squadron was pretty stable. What we had to add was technicians and support people who weren't normally part of the squadron. And those, for the most part, came out of the rest of the regiment. And then, of course, there were the normal cases where some people were just not able for either personal or administrative reasons to go. And some of those people had to be replaced. Luckily from my perspective, I didn't have to replace very many key people; and especially the officers and the senior NCOs on the squadron there were very few changes.

INTERVIEWER: How did you and your unit travel to the theatre?

KAMPMAN: Well, in fact, that part was really something because, as I mentioned before, the rest of the battle group's equipment had gone by sea several weeks earlier before the change in the mission and it was in fact enroute. So our equipment, the armoured squadron and the mortar platoon's equipment, was still sitting in Canada. And the question was whether there was going to be a second ship or if they were going to find another way to deploy.

And interestingly enough, at the same time, the Americans were organizing the air movement of their equipment and the coalition equipment. We made a – the Canadian Government made a – request to the Americans to see if they could find a hole in their air movement schedule. And, in fact, the Americans found a hole in the air movement schedule to move our equipment by air. And to my knowledge it was the first time since Egypt that we actually deployed an armoured sub-unit by air – by airlift – into a theatre.

So our equipment was moved down to Trenton. We had – as the airflow was working out – we were waiting for a window of opportunity to move our equipment by C-5 Galaxy

and by Starlifter aircraft. So the question was then who was going to go and who was going to take part in the early reconnaissance stage of the operations. And at the end of the day, because there was still so much to do in terms of preparation and especially for personnel preparation and given from a morale perspective the fact that Christmas was you know, very, very, coming very close on and from my perspective it was going to be really, really desirable that as many members of the squadron would be able to spend Christmas with their families before this mission started, I decided in the end that I was the only one that was going to go prior to Christmas from the squadron. So, on the 19th of December, 1992, I deployed with 2 Commando by Hercules aircraft from Trenton all the way into theatre. It was a thirty-six hour “Herc” ride.

INTERVIEWER: How many stages did that take?

KAMPMAN: I think we stopped in Ireland, we stopped in Crete, we stopped in Djibouti and then we flew into theater so... It was an incredible ride. You could imagine a Commando – an entire Commando, which in those days was, I guess, about a hundred and twenty soldiers plus a few of us thrown in on top of that – in a “Herc” that also had a bunch of gear thrown in the back. Flew out of Trenton in the middle of the night. Three hours out – engine problems. Had to turn around and go back to Trenton [laughs]. Fix the aircraft, another couple of hours later, take off again and then go on this long, long trek. And I often remember it was almost surreal, stopping in Djibouti, which was sort of the final step before flying into Somalia. And Djibouti was also the home to one of the French Foreign Legion Regiments which was also preparing to deploy into Somalia as part of the coalition. So we landed in this airstrip which is full of aircraft and attack helicopters and everything else and we got the “OK” to basically upload ammo, including grenades and the whole nine yards. And of course, something that was completely foreign to the Canadian concept, in those days, flying in a Canadian Forces aircraft with a full load of ammunition including a round up the spout.

INTERVIEWER: Did the aircrew have some grave doubts about all of this?

KAMPMAN: I think the aircrew had some serious doubts about this, especially with the idea of soldiers sitting around in the aircraft with grenades and live ammo all over the place [laughs]. So that was really quite different. And then to fly into and arrive at Baledogle – this abandoned Somalia Air Force Base – with all these skeletons of these aircraft, you know, lying around. And to be dropped off at the end of this runway with all your gear and all your kit. And then to be told that, “Oh yah, the Canadian camp is a kilometer and a half that way.” [laughs] “And there is no truck to carry your gear” [Laughs].

INTERVIEWER: This airfield, now it had been secured by the US....

KAMPMAN: Yah. The US Marines had arrived, of course, in the much celebrated and televised event of the landing of the US Forces to secure Mogadishu. And as they moved out and established their bridgehead, it had included Baledogle as a major airstrip. Which was one of the key objectives for the Americans, was to capture Baledogle because

Baledogle was C-141 Starlifter-capable and therefore was a key requirement for the Americans in addition to the Mogadishu Airport itself. Because the Mogadishu Airport was the only airstrip that could take C-5 Galaxies. So I got there...

INTERVIEWER: How far was this from Mogadishu – Baledogle?

KAMPMAN: Baledogle was about fifty kilometers outside of Mogadishu. So I got there and once I got there and on the ground and spent about two days acclimatizing to the environment, which was very different from certainly anything that I had ever faced in terms of the heat and sort of the general conditions that we were living in. At the same time the mission was evolving and I was – I started getting involved with the planning for the mission. I started getting involved. By that time most of the regimental headquarters was on the ground and established. Two Commando was basically the first sub-unit of the battle group that was on the ground, so it was basically used for security of our part of that area around the airstrip. And we started to enter into the battle procedure for the actual mission that we were going to go on. The commanding officer received orders. And it was interesting at that time. The battle group was under the command of 7th Marine Regiment. So we actually started the mission being under command of the MEF, the Marine Expeditionary Force, which was based on 7th Marine Regiment. And eventually we kept changing command relationships with the Americans. We went from being under command of the Marines, then we went to being under the command of 10th Mountain Division – of one of the Brigades of 10th Mountain Division, US Army. And at that time we received orders to eventually – for what was eventually going to be Canadian sector up by Belet Huen and then we went through the whole business of deploying.

And that's when I got involved in the planning because nobody in the regimental headquarters really had any experience in moving large numbers of vehicles over great distances. And thankfully, when I was a troop leader in Germany, I had been a member of the reconnaissance squadron – of the Brigade Reconnaissance Squadron – and therefore I had experience in road moves – in large road moves – in Germany. I had also been the regimental liaison officer who in the regiment is responsible for organizing the road move of the regiment. So I suggested to the commanding officer that planning and controlling the road move of the battle group from Mogadishu across three hundred and fifty kilometers to Belet Huen was probably a good task for the armoured squadron. He immediately agreed and therefore I found myself caught up over the next week and a half in the detailed planning of the battle group move and eventually commanding the battle group move from Mogadishu to Belet Huen.

So, if you could imagine Christmas day, 25th of December, 1992, out on this sort of desert patch around this abandoned Somali Air force Base, the commanding officer standing there. The staff had built this sort of large terrain model of Belet Huen and the area around Belet Huen, and this sort of embankment that was looking down on this terrain model with all of the officers and key appointments of the battle group. And Lieutenant Colonel Carol Mathieu, the commanding officer, standing there saying, "Gentlemen, Merry Christmas. Orders". And that was the battle group "O group" for the move to

Belet Huen. But I think it was a reflection of the various cultures that existed in that battle group, that the airborne was very, very focused on the air assault – what was, in fact – they were planning it as an air assault on Belet Huen using US Marine CH -52 helicopters, transport helicopters. While I was very much looking at and concerned about the move of the vehicles and especially the combat vehicles, of the battle group, from Mogadishu to Belet Huen.

INTERVIEWER: Now had the Airborne Regiment vehicles arrived in theatre at this point?

KAMPMAN: No. The ship was still enroute and therefore the type of force and the size of force that the airborne could put into Belet Huen off the bat was extremely limited. So they had 2 Commando and they had some elements of the Services Commando and the Regimental Headquarters. Initially they asked – they actually asked – the Coalition Command to support a parachute drop. They wanted to parachute drop into Belet Huen. And the Coalition Command would have nothing to do with it. They thought that was completely outlandish. So the next step was to make it a heliborne operation and to go in there as an air-mobile assault, not knowing what was on the ground, not knowing what population was doing there, not knowing what kind of rival forces were on the ground. So the commanding officer on that “O Group” on Christmas day was really focusing on this air mobile operation and all the details – as they sat through all the details of this air mobile operation – while I was still trying to figure out how we’re going to get the sort of four hundred vehicles of the battle group up there.

INTERVIEWER: Was there any consideration as to how this air mobile force would have been supported?

KAMPMAN: Well, that was the key weakness to the whole concept. Because once you sort of – their real concern was capturing the airstrip in Belet Huen. And Belet Huen did have a Hercules capable airstrip - and then sort of establishing the security around what was eventually going to be the base camp area and so, really, trying to sort of get themselves established on the ground. The problem was, of course, without any vehicles, and especially any transport vehicles, the whole issue of sustaining the force in what was looking like about a week to a week and half before you could get the battle group with its other commandos – which were mounted in armoured personnel carriers – up to that town was really a huge concern on my part. And darned near led to the failure of the mission, in reality, because they ran into significant, significant problems in that force in that week and a half that they were sitting there.

INTERVIEWER: So they did proceed then with the air mobile assault?

KAMPMAN: Yah. And luckily, they were unopposed. There was no opposition. The rival forces of the civil war were, in fact, a hundred and fifty kilometers away. And so there was no opposition. They basically landed there. The biggest problem from the minute they got themselves on the ground was, in fact, sustaining the operation. Plus the fact that Belet Huen, which is a large city, about two hundred thousand people, on the

Shebelle river that flows out of Ethiopia and eventually flows down into the Indian Ocean close to Mogadishu, the airstrip was on the western side of the town, of the city. And where the Airborne was establishing their camp was on the eastern side of the city, on the other side of the river. So between their airhead and their camp was a city of two hundred thousand people and a river [laughs], and no transport trucks.

INTERVIEWER: Now, was the river – the river was actually flowing year round then?

KAMPMAN: Oh yah, yah. Big. Shebelle is a big river.

INTERVIEWER: And how do you spell that?

KAMPMAN: S-H-E-B-E-L-L-E, I believe. And so, lucky for them that they were able to pack two Grizzlies as part of the advance party. They had been able to airlift two Grizzlies in the theatre on a Hercules Aircraft and they were able to airlift these two Grizzlies into Belet Huen; and those were the only two vehicles that they had in that week plus to actually move equipment around and support the troops that were on the ground. So it was very touch and go in that first week.

INTERVIEWER: Yah, it must have been. When did the vehicles and the rest of the party – when did your squadron arrive?

KAMPMAN: In fact, my squadron – I should say that after Christmas, after that “O Group”, I deployed down to Mogadishu and, in fact, for several days, I was on board PRESERVER with the Task Force - with Colonel Labbé’s Task Force Headquarters. And I was with them to basically complete the planning for the road move of the battle group. And then I basically took up residence on the Mogadishu Airport on the place where we were going to establish our Canadian Camp. And I was there when my first vehicles arrived on New Year’s Eve of 1993. When the first Galaxy came in with the first of my vehicles, in fact my vehicle was the first vehicle off the Galaxy which was great to see the other two members of my crew. It was like a – the best present that I could get.

But Mogadishu was complete and utter chaos. There was no control over that airport. In fact, we sort of grabbed a piece of terrain to try to sort of establish a place where the crew – where the Sea King crews - from PRESERVER could actually bring the equipment and the supplies that were sitting on PRESERVER. Because a lot of the – a lot of the munitions and a lot of the supplies for the battle group were on PRESERVER in addition to the RO-RO that was bringing the rest of it. So they basically vertrepped or carried by Sea King helicopter almost all the supplies off of PRESERVER and brought them into Mogadishu. So we had to have a place to put the stuff. So basically, they had one Corporal supply tech; and again, try to imagine from the perspective of 2005, here it is the end of 1992, beginning of 1993, no National Support Element for the mission. None. So they had one Corporal supply tech off PRESERVER ...

INTERVIEWER: That was it?

KAMPMAN: With a fork lift. And that's all he had. So as this stuff was being dropped by the Sea Kings on the ramp way at Mogadishu Airport, he was grabbing the stuff and sort of piling it up, and in the only corner that we could find for us to set up a camp. And basically from that, the Canadian Camp at Mogadishu Airport developed. But everybody was basically doing the same thing. So all of the various forces were trying to carve out a piece of terrain. And I remember to this day, this US Air Force Major – this harassed US Air Force Major - with this hand drawn diagram of the airport trying to figure out where all the contingents were and who was in command of the various contingents.

INTERVIEWER: Ostensibly, the airport was under the control of the Americans but....

KAMPMAN: The US Air Force was providing air traffic control. We still had UN forces that were providing perimeter security. Pakistanis who were actually a part of the UN mission which was running at the same time as the coalition mission which made it very, very confusing, especially when it came to any kind of local defence on the ground. So the Pakistanis were holding the perimeter of the airstrip, and they were under a – completely under a different set of Rules of Engagement from the coalition that was on the airstrip. And meanwhile, Aideed's forces were firing mortars into the airstrip. So, you know, you'd be standing there in the morning – the way I tell people today, it was like a bad Vietnam movie [laughs]. I can remember standing there in the morning, shaving away, looking over – the main gate of the airstrip was maybe three hundred meters away, four hundred meters away – watching 120 millimeter mortar rounds coming in and landing close to the main gate of the airport. And the Pakistanis, you know, bugging out. And looking over to the left and watching these US Marine Super Cobras taking off, hovering over top of the airport and firing rockets into the area where the mortar fire was coming from. And that was the situation that we were sitting in at Mogadishu Airport.

INTERVIEWER: And how long were you at Mogadishu Airport?

KAMPMAN: I was there, I guess, probably for the better part of just over a week. While we gathered together the vehicles where we gathered together the equipment - and then were getting ready for the road move.

INTERVIEWER: Interview with Mike Kampman. End of side 1.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1

INTERVIEWER: Canadian War Museum Oral History Program. Interview with Mike Kampman. Tape 1, Side 2.

KAMPMAN: So I think it was around, it was at the end of the first week of January when the battle group's equipment had been off loaded from the ship. Most of the supplies were off PRESERVER. The other commandos – One and Three Commando, the people from Services Commando, the rest of the members of the battle group, had finally arrived by airlift and we were able to marry everybody up with their equipment.

So over the period of two days, essentially what happened was, A Squadron, reinforced with both reconnaissance platoons, and I think it is interesting that the battle group had two reconnaissance platoons. The second one they called Direct Fire Support Platoon, but essentially it was a second reconnaissance platoon. So reinforced with those two platoons and reinforced with the mortar platoon, I deployed this force up the, basically three hundred and fifty kilometers of badly chewed up road to Belet Huen and set up a traffic control network to basically then conduct the road move of all the equipment and personnel from Mogadishu to Belet Huen. And, in fact, the route was not secure. And we had to, in addition to setting up the traffic control network, we had to actually secure the route.

And it was during that time that we came under fire for the first time in the operation as we were going through some of the villages on the route up. And I think it wasn't so much that it was a concentrated attack on coalition forces, it was more a response from people who were suddenly faced with armoured vehicles from a force they had never seen before. These people had been suffering through three years of civil war and their first reaction was to actually shoot. But it also gave me my first experience and lesson in coalition operations because, as I was doing this, I had the support from a section of two US Marine Super Cobras. And there was one incident on this road move where my lead Cougars came under machine gun fire. And as we were deploying to try and figure out where it was coming from and what exactly was going on, these two Marine Cobras actually started to move in to actually get set up to fire on the village. And I had to very forcefully stop them from, you know, taking any kind of action. But their first reaction was to actually shoot, and who cared about the consequences. To them, it wasn't an issue about worrying about collateral damage. Collateral damage was not a concern of theirs. So that was, in retrospect, an important lesson during that part of the mission because it really made me very sensitive to the fact that everybody had some different ideas about how we were going to react to fire, how we were going to deal with hostile incidents.

But eventually we got the battle group up to Belet Huen, and of course, being the first ones to set up the movement – the traffic control network – as the whole thing sort of finished, we were the last ones to get into camp at Belet Huen. And it was a bit of a shock to arrive in Belet Huen after two days on the road and everybody, obviously pretty bagged – pretty tired by then – and find out that the regimental headquarters staff in their detailed planning of the regimental camp had not planned for a spot for my squadron. So we arrive in Belet Huen and we're trying to figure out what to do and luckily my friends in the Engineer Squadron that was part of the battle group were nice enough to give us some parking space on the back end of their part of the camp for overnight. But obviously it was not a very satisfactory set up.

And it was at that time that the CO was developing his plan for how we were going to secure the Canadian Sector which was centered on Belet Huen. Very, very large sector. I think it was probably in the neighborhood of about, I would say, about four hundred kilometers wide, east-west, by about five hundred kilometers north-south. No, probably about three hundred kilometers north-south. So it was a very large sector. He divided the sector into four parts. The area immediately around Belet Huen was given to Two

Commando because Two Commando did not have any vehicles. They were dismounted. That was a decision made early by the battle group because they actually had sufficient vehicles to mount all three commandos but they...

INTERVIEWER: Sufficient in theatre or sufficient at home?

KAMPMAN: Both. But because they had decided to form these two large reconnaissance platoons, they had decided to dismount Two Commando, which was to be one of the causes of the problems later on in the mission – in fact throughout the mission. So Two Commando, being dismounted, was given responsibility for Belet Huen. The area to the west of the Shebelle River around Belet Huen and out to the end of the sector was given to One Commando. And then the area to the east of Belet Huen was then divided into two. The southeast portion was given to Three Commando and the northeast portion was given to my squadron. So he created these four sectors and, I think, the important part especially for my squadron, it was only in the northeast sector where the civil war was going on. All the other sectors were controlled by the United Somali Congress which was the part – the side of the Civil war under the command of Farah Aided.

INTERVIEWER: Now, Farah Aided was challenging the government in Mogadishu?

KAMPMAN: Well no actually, Farah Aided controlled Mogadishu. He was the one who had led the rebellion against President Siad Barre.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

KAMPMAN: And it was the Somali National Front which was the faction under Siad Barre which still occupied half of that northeast sector - of the Canadian Sector. So it was only in that northeast sector where the civil war was still happening. And that was the sector that was given to A Squadron.

INTERVIEWER: Was that because of the fire power and the equipment that you had?

KAMPMAN: To be honest, I don't know 'cause it was never explained to me that way. It was simply, "This is your sector." There were no cross attachments, which was the other thing I thought was weird. In hindsight, there was no cross attachments of armour and infantry. Everybody was essentially operating "pure" according to their standard sub-unit organization. And indicative of the state of what was going on up there, the town of Matabaan, which was right in the middle of that northeast sector...

INTERVIEWER: Can you spell that?

KAMPMAN: Matabaan, M-A-T-A-B-A-A-N. Matabaan was being threatened by the Somalia National Front. Somalia National Front forces were conducting offensive operations in that area. Matabaan was actually held by the United Somali Congress and Matabaan had asked for help. And word had gotten through the coalition to us because

United States Special Forces – Green Berets – had been on the ground in the country for about two months before the coalition arrived. And there was a US Special Forces A-Team – which is about twelve guys – that was on the ground in Matabaan. And therefore, the CO decided to conduct a reconnaissance the next day to go up to Matabaan and see what the situation was like. So he told me to come along on this reconnaissance because I was going to be responsible for the sector. So we went up the next day to Matabaan. Had to go through a mine field, which is indicative of the sector. We got to Matabaan and sort of figured out what was going on and it was during that time, having experienced what I had experienced in Belet Huen, that I decided that Matabaan would be the ideal place to establish the squadron. Not only was it right in the middle of the sector, and I could not seriously figure out how I was going to secure this area having to conduct a ninety kilometer road move every time I was going to move into there. But, it was also – I had not gained a very positive view of the organization of the battle group and therefore I decided that day to move my squadron up to Matabaan. Within the next week, essentially, I moved the entire squadron and established a base camp at Matabaan and I stayed there throughout the mission. And from there we conducted all our operations. But the sector, as we were to discover, the sector was very, very dangerous for two reasons. One, as I said, the civil war was still going on between the two factions and two, the area was covered with mine fields. Not only from the civil war but also, as we discovered, from the Ogaden Wars that had occurred in the 1960's between Ethiopia and Somalia.

INTERVIEWER: You were fairly close to the Ethiopian border?

KAMPMAN: We were right up on the Ethiopian border and, in fact, in that part of the country it is not even a recognized international border. It's what's called an administrative line – literally a line in the sand – which is contested between the two countries, is not recognized by international treaty and it's very sort of ambiguous. And that was the area that we ended up operating in.

The other problem we were faced with was there were no maps of that area. We were actually operating off of Russian maps. When we arrived in Somalia there were no sort of western standard maps. So what Mapping and Charting Establishment had done, in cooperation with their colleagues in the United States, is they had taken Russian maps and overlaid our NATO grid system on Russian maps. So we had this very strange map where all of the features were sort of in black and white as copies from this Russian map. And this purple grid system had been laid over it to show – so we had a grid reference system. It was very, very instructive because most of us had never used Russian maps before and we discovered how detailed the Russians were. Very exhaustive detail the Russians put into these maps to the point of marking the height of trees [laughs], which is interesting. Mind you there weren't a lot of trees in some areas...

INTERVIEWER: What sort of scale would these maps be?

KAMPMAN: Same scale as ours. We were using one over fifty thousand maps, but it was extremely detailed – very impressive. But as you got up close to the Ethiopian

border, suddenly the detail stopped and it was a blank sheet, and there was nothing. So for most of the sector there was absolutely no map data.

So here we are, a place we'd never been before – mine fields, two warring factions, all this new equipment and no maps and secure the sector, [laughs]. So we broke out of these boxes these brand new GPS receivers, sat down for about a day and a half going through the manuals to figure out how to use these things. And then I basically sent the squadron out for the better part of a week, literally on a mapping exercise to map all the roads and the routes and the villages and the towns and the various hamlets and so on. And from this map data, it was a classic reconnaissance mission of going out and coming back with geographic data and hand drawing maps of the area.

INTERVIEWER: That's fascinating.

KAMPMAN: So eventually, I didn't bring it along today, but I've still got my hand drawn map of this sector. But the danger of what we were doing became very apparent. We were – we had really established a presence in the area that was controlled by the United Somali Congress. And we knew that we could not be successful in this mission until we actually established contact with the other side of the civil war with the other faction. And to do that we were actually going to have to make our way across that battlefield between the two of them.

And in our first foray, as we sort of moved our way into the real extreme northeast corner of the sector, that we had our first mine strike. Throughout the mission, I actually – my force suffered six mine strikes. Of the seven mine strikes experienced by the entire battlegroup, A Squadron experienced six mine strikes – six of them. And that gives you a sense of what the sector was like. We were – and it was again indicative of what was going to happen for this mission – we were essentially conducting a classic advance to contact up this road through – it was sort of bushy country. I get a radio message from my Sergeant Major who is leading the Echelon that he's hit a mine – his vehicle. So the Sergeant Major's vehicle was the first vehicle to go up on an anti-tank mine.

Amazing! And another feature of the mission was the robustness of our wheeled armoured vehicles, both the six wheeled and the eight wheeled armoured vehicles; something that we had never expected was their resilience to anti-tank mines. Not because of the thickness of the armour but because of the shape of the hull. Because of the slope of the hull it allowed to – it basically diffused the blast of the mine out and away from the vehicle. Still did a job on the vehicle but the sergeant major – Sergeant Major Sloan – you know, typical experienced NCO in the Canadian Army, after he realized his vehicle had blown up on an anti tank mine and that he and his driver were OK, literally reached down, picked up the radio – which had blown right out of the radio trays – picked it up, slammed it back in the radio tray and actually got it operational and working again [laughs]. And called in the mine strike.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever use the – was it an engineer squadron or troop...?

KAMPMAN: There was an engineer squadron attached to the battle group and most of the time I had an engineer troop supporting my squadron. And, in fact, as we go along here, there were a couple of times that I had to actually use the engineers as infantry because the battle group wouldn't give me any infantry [laughs]. Anyway...

INTERVIEWER: So you made your camp at...

KAMPMAN: Matabaan.

INTERVIEWER: Matabaan. Can you describe it – describe the town and ...?

KAMPMAN: Sure. Matabaan was a village of about, I guess between five and ten thousand people. It was really a result of the type of artificial development that had been going on in the desert – in the Ogaden Desert – sort of during the 1980's, I guess, in Somalia where they used high technology to build these – to dig these very, very deep wells down into the aquifer which was about two or three hundred meters down under the desert. And then having created this artificial water source, these villages grew up around them and then along came the civil war. And as a result of the civil war, they either confiscated or destroyed the same equipment that was pumping the water that had created these villages in the first place. And as a result, there was a shortage of water. Which was, in fact, a much bigger problem than a lack of food, was a shortage of water.

So Matabaan was very indicative of these towns that had grown up in the desert. Very much dependent on – it was essentially an animal grazing nomad culture. People for the most part were living off goat herds and camel herds, couple of cattle, but that was about it. But still it was a fairly robust community in terms of being a trading centre.

We established our camp on the east end of town after some negotiation with the village elders because that basically put us on any sort of approach that the Somalia National Front Forces would use to go into the town. We very quickly developed a very close relationship with the town to the point where through most of the mission my soldiers could walk through the town without any sort of concern – real concern – for security. So we got along very well with the locals. Nevertheless, we set up the camp very much from the point of view of defence. This was not an administrative camp by any stretch of the imagination. We set up barbed wire. We dug run up pits for the Cougars so that if we were, in fact, under attack we could have put the Cougars in some fairly robust defensive positions to use their fire power. We sited in and surveyed a mortar base plate in the middle of the town. So we were well set up for defense and we conducted ourselves in that posture all the way through the mission.

INTERVIEWER: By contrast was the – were the original camps at Belet Huen more administrative than...?

KAMPMAN: Well, there were some significant problems with the regimental camp in Belet Huen because what had happened was – and again, it was really a result of the culture in the Airborne Regiment. You'll remember that in the 1980's and into – even

into the early 1990's – the Commandos were separate units. And it was really only just a couple of years before the mission occurred where they had brought the Commandos together under a single unit. But the culture that existed in the regiment was still very much that the Commandos were very independent. And therefore, when they set up the camp – as I said the regimental camp was located on the east side of Belet Huen, on the east side of the Shebelle River between Belet Huen and the major north south highway that ran through from Mogadishu all the way to Somalia, or all the way to Ethiopia. So there was this secondary road that came off the north south highway and the regiment, rather than creating a single perimeter either to the north of this main access route or the south of this access route, had basically created independent sub-unit perimeters straddling both sides of this main east-west road.

So you could immediately appreciate the security problem of all of these individual sub-unit perimeters straddling this major public route. So you had people constantly going through what was essentially the centre of the camp. Very, very difficult to coordinate any kind of defensive measures between the camps – the sub-unit camps. So in fact, throughout the mission there were several cases of friendly fire between...

INTERVIEWER: Two of the separate camps?

KAMPMAN: Between guards and the various sub-unit camps [laughs].

INTERVIEWER: So, by contrast, obviously you had a single camp?

KAMPMAN: I had a single perimeter under one command that was very much in control and we had one route that was, in fact, the east-west route out of Matabaan. We were located just to the north of that and what we did is we brought in the engineers and we created a rather large berm so that the camp could not be brought under direct fire from the road.

INTERVIEWER: So, did you experience any security problems with your camp?

KAMPMAN: There was never any direct attack – direct military attack on the camp. What we did have problems with was theft. And for the most part, what it was, nomad children were very adept at getting through the wire and grabbing whatever they could grab, you know, whether it was food or water or whatever and getting out. So, it was really a dilemma because to have increased the security of the camp to the point where that sort of thing would have been impossible, you would have had to set up devices that would have essentially been a danger, actually, to the lives of the kids that were trying to do this. In fact, because it wasn't really a military threat to the camp – it was a security threat but it wasn't a military threat to the camp – we simply used the devices at our disposal: guards, surveillance. Whenever we caught one of these kids we'd turn them over to the village elders. You know, that sort of stuff. But really what I was more afraid of was that somebody was going to shoot one of these kids in the wire, which is exactly what happened in Belet Huen. So it was always a challenge and we always had to go through a bit of an indoctrination process. Whenever we had new troops arrive from

Belet Huen, be they support troops or a new engineer troop as the engineer troops rotated, because eventually we had enough room in our camp that we could house an engineer troop. We could house extra support troops from Belet Huen. So we always had to kind of go through this indoctrination period where we had to line them up and say, “You will not under any circumstances, take a shot [laughs]. I know what you’ve been told down at Belet Huen but you will not shoot people in the wire while you’re in this camp.”

INTERVIEWER: So, can you tell me – you described patrols and so forth. What were your operations on a consistent basis?

KAMPMAN: Well first of all, I had to establish – I had to, as I said, move out and establish security of the sector. And, as I said, our first attempt at doing that had ended up at losing a vehicle. Thankfully we didn’t lose any lives. So it was at that point that I re-organized the squadron. As I mentioned before, I re-organized the fighting echelon of the squadron into reconnaissance – into a real reconnaissance organization. We took some extra time to train with the new equipment that we had because we were still integrating a lot of this new equipment that we had. So we took about a week to really sort of rest and re-fit, re-organize, re-orient. And then we at the same time, we integrated this American Special Forces Team that was by then occupying the camp with us. In fact, I invited these guys...

INTERVIEWER: So they moved in with you?

KAMPMAN: So they moved in. I had my own strategic level American Special Forces Team, not really under my command, but essentially doing whatever I asked them to. So the next attempt we made was really a much more conscious effort. We organized ourselves. I asked for, in fact, I asked for a company of infantry. I was refused any infantry support. So then I asked for a troop of engineers and I got a troop of engineers. So eventually I ended up using this troop of engineers as an infantry platoon for this operation. So I had essentially a mini combat team. And we then, in a day, we moved up, breached the minefield that existed between the two rival factions and made our way up to the village of Balenbale – that’s B-A-L-E-N-B-A-L-E – which was the main centre of the Somali National Front Resistance in that corner, that northeast corner, of my sector. And that was by far, up to that point, the most dangerous operation.

We were still, as I said, we were still mapping out this part of the sector – didn’t know exactly where the town was but we had met local herdsman, local nomads along the way who gave us an idea that we were getting close to this town. So we stopped and we sat down and we had a little bit of a confab between us and the Americans to discuss the various scenarios of what would happen if we got shot at. And I was able to convince the Americans that shooting back – immediately returning fire might not necessarily be the best thing to do because if we were going to be in a populated area, you didn’t know, you know, what was going to happen. They agreed that, for the purposes of moving into this town, that I was in command which was really important that we establish a single chain of command at that point. So – ‘cause nothing was really obligating them to do whatever I told them to do – so we actually made, we actually got in sight of the village and we got

up to about five hundred meters from this village and then all hell broke loose. And we took heavy mortar fire, tank fire and machinegun fire from various parts of the village. And it was, including 106 [mm] recoilless rifles which are still a weapon of choice in that part of the world. I will never forget my driver yelling across the intercom in my vehicle, “My God sir, they are shooting at us.” And the first thing that came to my mind was, “Really? What was your first clue?” [Laughs].

While we were trying to essentially extract ourselves because the fire had – basically the opposing side was firing from inside the village from behind a wall of women and children. A large part of the village population had started to come out of the village to, I guess, you know, come and talk to us. And the opposing faction had fired from behind women and children.

INTERVIEWER: So had you fired back it would have been...?

KAMPMAN: A massacre.

INTERVIEWER: A massacre?

KAMPMAN: Yah, it would have been a massacre. So, luckily, the Americans had a translator. The Special Forces guys had a translator, which we did not at that point. And the translator was able to get the attention of the village elders and convince them that we were not there to attack the town. And meanwhile, we had fired a couple warning shots over the town. Max elevation, seventy-six millimeter cannons firing warning shots, you can imagine. Anyway, as a result the military troops bugged out and the firing stopped and we were able to then move into the town. And, almost right away, we started to – again as sort of part of our goodwill plan – we started to conduct humanitarian assistance ops. In fact, we opened up a clinic on the back end of the Bison ambulance and started to treat people in the town who had not seen a doctor in about three years and we very quickly established friendly relations with the town. That basically allowed me to finish sort of the occupation of the sector. From then on, I set up two cantonment sites to collect heavy equipment from both sides of the war. One in the north at Balenbale and one in the south outside of Matabaan. We collected tanks, howitzers, heavy mortars, ammunition, anti-tank and anti-personnel mines throughout the rest of the operation.

INTERVIEWER: And these were willingly given up or how did you...?

KAMPMAN: Willingly and unwillingly. For example, the SNF had a T-62 tank which they were reluctant to give up so we took two Cougars and destroyed it with seventy-six millimeter fire. And we warned them to move out of the way, and they moved out of the way and we fired in and blew the thing to smithereens. Which was a bit of a surprise ‘cause we never really knew whether at that point whether that seventy-six millimeter HESH round was going to penetrate a T-62 tank, and it did. So from that point on we collected several tanks, mostly T-54s. The M-48 tank which had fired on us – an old M-48 which had fired on us, on that day outside of Balenbale and they had a couple of dozen 105 Howitzers, quite a few 120 millimeter mortars – Soviet-made 120s – and lots of

machine guns, lots of small arms, lots of anti-tank and anti-personnel mines. So, I established essentially troop-sized guards over these two cantonment areas. And then I set up a series of patrols – constant patrols – throughout the sector to basically maintain a military presence and to make sure that, you know, it was both sides realized that nobody was going to get away with anything while we were there. The danger of the constant patrolling was that – as a result of that – we had vehicles moving through this system of minefields and it was because of that that we lost several vehicles to anti-tank mines.

Tragically, the worst incident we had was, in fact, on the main road on the way between Matabaan and Balenbale, which we thought we had cleared completely. A couple of weeks after we had made contact with Balenbale, I was going up on, essentially a diplomatic mission. We had a representative of the US government with us who wanted to go up to Balenbale to talk to the Somalia National Front and I was going up with my Cougar and the American Special Forces Team. The American Special Forces Team took off early because their Hummer Jeeps were slower than the Cougar was – the Cougar was much better cross country capability – and just as I caught up with the Hummers, the second Hummer of the team blew up on an anti-tank mine. It seriously injured all four soldiers that were in the vehicle. The driver eventually died of very serious wounds. That was the worst incident that we had. We lost one of the engineer Bisons to an anti-tank mine. Which was amazing that we didn't have anybody killed because the Bison was actually filled with plastic explosive and det cord. And they were actually heading up to actually blow up some mines and they blew up on an anti-tank mine!

INTERVIEWER: Were any of these vehicle losses repairable or were they...?

KAMPMAN: We actually eventually repaired the Sergeant Major's Bison. That was the only vehicle that we were actually able to repair. I also lost three Cougars to anti-tank mines, two on the same day. A single patrol, patrolling between the cantonment areas, the first vehicle blew up on an anti-tank mine. The second vehicle went back to get a wrecker to recover the first one and as it moved back leading the wrecker back to the site, it blew up on an anti-tank mine.

INTERVIEWER: Did you get any replacements for these vehicles or...?

KAMPMAN: Never.

INTERVIEWER: You just made due with fewer?

KAMPMAN: Yah, we just made due with fewer vehicles throughout the mission. So a dangerous area throughout the entire mission and, in fact, I would say that it was really the death of the American that changed the attitude of everybody. Up to that point we had had – I guess it was the third mine strike – so after the first two mine strikes where we had no serious casualties the crews were starting to get pretty cocky about their ability to survive. And after we lost the Americans, and especially after the American soldier – and by then the Americans were very much a part of the squadron. We had developed

some very close relationships with these guys. After losing that vehicle and especially the soldier who was, by the way, the team medic who died – that really hit people.

And it was after that, that I started to see some significant signs of stress in the squadron. It really started to affect people, to the point where in the last month when you, I think, you typically really start to see stress when you start to approach the end of the mission. And people are more thinking about going home than they are thinking about what they are doing, that more and more you had crew commanders finding reasons why their vehicles couldn't go out on patrol that day. And it was pretty clear that it was starting to get to people.

INTERVIEWER: Did they have any personal protective equipment other than helmets? In fact, did they wear helmets?

KAMPMAN: No. We didn't wear helmets. In fact, we had no crew helmets for the vehicles. We had the American NOMEX tank suits that I made everybody wear – or at least the Cougar crews had to wear them – and we had flak vests for when we were not on the vehicle, which we would use depending on the situation. But in terms of additional armour for the Cougars, we didn't have any additional armour than what they were manufactured with. And in fact, we found out that the welds – the biggest problem with the Cougars themselves, the old six wheel AVGPs were the welds. And every one of the Cougars that went up on an anti-tank mine, all three of them, the welds on the hulls burst from the blast and therefore some of the effect of the blast went into the interior of the vehicle. So we did have some injuries, although no deaths from those mine strikes. Both of the Bisons that went up, the welds held together on the hull. So obviously going from the first generation light armoured to the second generation light armoured vehicle, GM Diesel Division, and later General Dynamics, had improved their construction production techniques [laughs].

INTERVIEWER: Did you see much of the equipment of other contingents in the force and if so how would you compare...?

KAMPMAN: I had the opportunity to visit the Italians and the French Foreign Legion and, of course, the Americans. The American Marine Regiment was obviously very well equipped including some M-1 Tanks. They had 155 howitzers. They had a lot of attack aviation and of course they had the entire support of the Marine Expeditionary Force, including the naval forces off shore, including for a long period of time, USS Kitty Hawk and her entire carrier battle group. The Italians had brought their airborne brigade which was supported by a large, again a large, helicopter force including attack helicopters. But their vehicles were essentially light except for the fact they had brought a company of Centauro Tank Destroyers which were the eight wheeled tank destroyer with the 105 millimeter gun which gave them some significant capability.

The Foreign Legion Regiment out of Djibouti was extremely well equipped. Came with their own anti-tank missiles, came with their own attack helicopters and they were very, very tough customers – very tough. Killed quite a few Somalis – shot outright. So were

– I would say that from a – purely from a fire power perspective, we were not badly off. We were fairly well equipped. Our biggest problem was that we were equipped with a generation of armoured vehicles which were never intended for that scale of operation. And therefore, all of the known limitations and known problems with those vehicles had been overlooked for years because it was never assumed – nobody ever assumed that they were going to be used on real operations.

INTERVIEWER: Exactly. Now you mentioned that you were operating virtually independently from the rest of the Airborne battle group. What were your relations with the battle group?

KAMPMAN: I would go down to orders once a week, more or less to try and figure out what was going on. And it was, you know, basically from the CO's perspective, I had been given my sector. I had been given my mission and that was it – carry on. I would, on occasion, I would request engineer support or I would request additional support. Once in the entire six months did I actually get infantry support – once.

INTERVIEWER: But you weren't given specific missions or specific taskings other than that you had a sector and you were responsible for that sector...?

KAMPMAN: Yah – and I was responsible for that sector.

INTERVIEWER: ...to conduct the pacification and ...?

KAMPMAN: Yah – to maintain security and basically to collect the heavy weapons in the sector and there were a number of initiatives coming out of UNITAF including “food for weapons” and, you know, these types of initiatives that really were not very effective. There was also one initiative that was carried out by Colonel Labbé which included operations outside of the UNITAF sector.

INTERVIEWER: Now Colonel Labbé was Commander of the Joint Task Force?

KAMPMAN: Of the Joint Task Force. And on a personal initiative he had tried to set up a meeting with some of the representatives of the Somalia National Front. But as a result – but that required us to move outside of the UNITAF area. And so with a troop of Cougars and supported by some of the helicopters of the Rotary Wing Flight which eventually joined the Force, we actually operated outside of the coalition area for a week which was, in my view to this day, a very questionable mission. To this day, I am not sure what our legal status was 'cause we were operating outside of the parameters of the mission – clearly out of the parameters of the mission.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know whether UNITAF was aware this mission at all?

KAMPMAN: No. To this day I don't know if UNITAF was aware of that mission. I have to assume that somebody was aware but there were no other forces involved in that

mission other than Canadian troops. And to my knowledge, it was entirely Serge Labbé's initiative.

INTERVIEWER: Interesting. Did you have any interaction with other international organizations – NGOs?

KAMPMAN: Yah. I think we had every non-governmental organization under the sun come through our sector at one point or another. Obviously ICRC, Save the Children, medecins sans frontiers. You name it, they were there, both from the Western world and from the Islamic world. We had a number of Islamic organizations come through. Some of them were very cooperative with us, many of them were not. Including the ICRC who were really not interested in working with the military. I think like the ICRC, many organizations were very sensitive to being perceived to be anything other than completely neutral in the mission. I had actually given my squadron second in command the responsibility of coordinating all of the NGO effort and it, as a result, gave us a lot of leverage with the two sides of the civil war.

I had run into a problem. Some of my troops were fired on by forces of the Somali National Front at one point after – this was several weeks after we had established security of the sector. And basically I told them that if they wanted to see any relief supplies or support coming up that road that they would have to cooperate with me. There was no other way that relief effort was going to come up that road. Once we had established that understanding, things were very quiet from that particular area.

INTERVIEWER: But were these NGOs, some of them established on the ground or were they just coming in and out?

KAMPMAN: In those days, they were all passing through. We actually didn't have any NGOs that were permanently set up in our area. And, of course, it was always a bit of a surprise who showed up on any given day because there was very little coordination of the entire relief effort in the country or in that part of the theatre. So it was always a surprise who came knocking at your door looking for an escort.

INTERVIEWER: Interview with Mike Kampman. End of side 2.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 2

INTERVIEWER: Canadian War Museum Oral History Program. Interview with Mike Kampman, Tape 2 Side 1.

What were the most vexing operational problems affecting you and your unit?

KAMPMAN: Well, I think in retrospect you really have to start to talk about the impact of the events that were taking place in Belet Huen and how that was affecting the entire mission. As the events unfolded in Belet Huen, and particularly the torture of Shidane

Arone, had such a dramatic impact on the unit and especially the headquarters. It is really hard to imagine from today's perspective how something like that could affect operations in such an incredible way. I think, first of all, it's important to realize that almost from the minute the incident occurred, just about everybody in the battle group knew it had happened. I had, for example, in the medical organization - within the medical organization - I had med-As that were constantly rotating into my camp from Belet Huen. The day after the torture incident, I had a couple of new medics show up in my camp and one of them - a sergeant - asked to come and talk to me and I knew this guy from when he had been up in the camp before - a very good medic - and we were sitting down over a water and to this day I can remember him saying, "My God sir, they tortured somebody." And I said, "How do you know they tortured him?" And he said, "Cigarette burns on the feet." It was obvious - it was obvious to the entire medical organization what had occurred. And, essentially, the regimental headquarters went into what I would call spin drive. They went into panic. And, of course, that panic, and therefore the shift of focus away from operations and into the management of this incident, became greater and greater as days went by. And, of course, once it became known to the government - to the chain of command in the government - that something had happened - and I'm not sure to what degree the details were realized, off the bat, but then the process began of the first inquiry, the first board of inquiry. And again, that just served to further spin the regimental headquarters and divert their attention from what was going on. And I don't think it is - I don't think it's a stretch of the truth to say that, essentially, for the greater part of the latter half of the mission the regimental headquarters was not in command.

INTERVIEWER: It was dysfunctional?

KAMPMAN: It was very dysfunctional and essentially the sub-units - as much as we were on our own before, we were really on our own after that. In fact, I had more - from that time onwards - I had more interaction with the other sub-unit commanders in terms of co-ordinate operations than I did with regimental headquarters. So, if you will, it was almost like a group of independent sub-units that were coordinating between each other.

INTERVIEWER: It was command by default then?

KAMPMAN: Right. As opposed to a single strong force of command. The other thing was that we saw more of the JTF Commander, from that point on, taking a hand in the operations of the battle group. So it was quite a dramatic change and it created a lot of challenges for us because, without that sort of central coordinating function, we were very much left on our own to try to, you know, carry on with the mission and get things done and keep things, you know, moving. And we were still faced with the daily challenges and dangers of operating in, you know, that environment and trying to coordinate operations.

So it was very, very difficult. And, as I say, it only got worse as time went on as the inquiries cranked up, as we got more and more outside inspection from various levels of government and various groups. I can only say that I was thankful, having been

separated from the rest of the battle group, that my squadron by and large was insulated from that whole atmosphere that was going on down there.

The other problem we were facing – I guess the other two problems we were facing, one was an increasing incidence of visitors. Which has come to be the bane of the existence of any commander in operations, is this sort of constant round of social calls from people who absolutely insist on coming out and seeing what's going on.

But more so for us was the incidence of sickness started to rise dramatically. We had, because of exposure to an extremely contaminated environment where there were dead bodies all over the place – more animal but some human as well – and a significant amount of fecal matter that was in the dust that was flying around, eventually it was like a battle of attrition that we were starting to lose. And the health of the squadron started to suffer. Eventually, almost sixty percent of my soldiers came down with dysentery despite all of the precautions and despite all of the medical support that we had – including myself – I came down with shigella dysentery. And it really started to take a toll on the troops.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have many who were evacuated out of the theatre?

KAMPMAN: We had several that were evacuated out of Matabaan down to – we had a fairly robust medical facility set up down in Belet Huen including a miniature field hospital. So I had several soldiers who were evacuated down there, a couple that were near the point of death because of dehydration as a result of the effects of the dysentery and the heat. But luckily we didn't lose anybody. But it was very, very serious and it started to have a significant impact on the efficiency of operations, especially combined with the impact of the leave plan. And you really have to question, again in hindsight and we continue to do this, but the concept that had developed during the Cyprus years of a two week leave period in the middle of a six month operation. Where everybody was going to get this two week leave period, superimposed on an organization that had already been cut down to, in some cases the bare bones because of an artificial personell cap on the mission. So, you know, you put that together and really, for example, in a squadron that I had essentially three troops – each troop with two patrols – so in a squadron of six patrols at the height of between sickness and leave I really had three operational patrols that could function. So, you know, significant almost fifty percent impact on operations as a result of this leave policy and sickness. So that became a significant challenge.

Also, as a result of the incident where the American jeep blew up in the mine, the Americans pulled out of the – the sector was actually considered too dangerous for the American Special Forces and the American Special Forces were pulled out of the sector.

INTERVIEWER: And you soldiered on?

KAMPMAN: And we soldiered on.

INTERVIEWER: Returning to the Shidane Arone incident, you described how – what an effect it had within the battle group. How about outside? Did you find an effect from, say, the Somali population or other organizations?

KAMPMAN: I don't think the Somali people were aware. And, frankly, even if they were aware, I'm not sure how it would have affected them because after three years of civil war, and a very harsh existence even if there wasn't a civil war, I'm not sure if they would have really understood our reaction at how shocked we were. Frankly, the way they treat their own prisoners is pretty rough to start with. But the word, I think, got out, including into some of the NGOs that we were operating with, that something seriously – something had seriously gone wrong. And I had many people talk to me including members of the media who were constantly around. And I had several “off the record” conversations with member of the Canadian media on what was going on. And, I mean, these are not stupid people. And I would sit down and I had – luckily I had established some pretty good levels of trust with some of them and we were able to talk openly about what was going on, what was going to be the impact, what was going to be the fall out. You know, how was the Canadian media going to respond? How was the Canadian Government going to respond? I think all of us knew that this was going to have some very, very serious repercussions. I don't think any of us really foresaw how serious the repercussions were going to be, but we all knew that something very, very serious had occurred.

INTERVIEWER: Now you mentioned media. Before the incident, were there many representatives of the Canadian media there in theatre?

KAMPMAN: Oh, yah, absolutely, yah. In fact, one of my first interviews I had was sitting over a bottle of water with Susan Harada of CBC news down in Mogadishu as she was waiting for a ride out – a flight out [laughs]. We had Peter Kent from CTV. We had CNN. In fact, the day after the fire fight at Balenbale we went back to Balenbale to negotiate the cease fire between the USC and the Somali National Front, and with us on that trip came a CNN crew. It was kind of funny. I had been in this major fire fight – we had been shot at by everything up to heavy mortars and tanks. I asked for additional infantry support – I still couldn't get additional infantry support out of the battle group. The day I was in Balenbale, the rest of the battle group was having a “sports day” in Belet Huen – I kid you not – was having a “sports day” in Belet Huen. The CNN news crew had been there sitting in Belet Huen, had found out what had happened in Balenbale while the press – the public affairs officer had had them watching a bloody sports day down in Belet Huen. So they basically dumped the public affairs officer and on their own drove up to Matabaan. And because they were American, and because there were American Special Forces down in Matabaan, they didn't need anybody's permission, theoretically.

So they came up to Matabaan and I met up with these guys and they were pretty good – Tom Clancy, CNN News and his crew. And Tom said to me, he said, “So what's your plan?” I said, “Well, tomorrow we are going back up there to negotiate a cease fire and it will be the first cease fire in three years between the USC and SNF. And if you want to

come along, and you're willing to take the chances, you could ride in the back of one of the armoured vehicles." And he said, "I'm with you." So the CNN news crew came up with us and they filmed the negotiations and that night it went across international television. And I still have the tape of that CNN news transmission that shows us sitting around this circle with these military commanders negotiating this cease fire between the two sides. It was pretty interesting.

INTERVIEWER: In general, what were your impressions of the media?

KAMPMAN: I think there are – to me there's two groups. You have – and it's really not by nationality – you get a group of media who are the real international journalists and still the sort of war correspondents who are used to being out there in the bush. And they know what to do. They know how to take care of themselves. They know how to find the story and they know how to get the story out. They understand modern operations. They understand what you're doing and they don't get in the way. And then you get the other group which are really the – almost what I would call them – the "home town journalists" who say, "Oh, wouldn't it be neat to go out and get a story?" They've never been out in the bush before. They get out there – they're barely alive 'cause they've never, you know, had to suffer through those kind of conditions 'cause they usually operate in a news room office back home. And you spend more time trying to keep them from hurting themselves than anything else. And – I mean, they are good people, there's no question about it. And I'm sure they're very good at what they do back home but they're really kind of lost when they get out there.

The first group are very good, and that includes a lot of Canadian journalists who are out there that we were able to work with, and very impressive people.

INTERVIEWER: Now can you tell me what your typical day was like? What would your personal routine be during...?

KAMPMAN: Sure. Normally I was – well, we were living under tentage. The other thing was we were on hard rations throughout the whole mission. We never went to fresh rations during this mission, except for eventually one meal a week. We would get a cook from Belet Huen to cook us a fresh meal. So we had one fresh meal a week.

INTERVIEWER: So at Belet Huen they did have fresh rations?

KAMPMAN: More than we had. Although the battle group was supposed to be on hard rations – they had more access to fresh rations than we had. But that one fresh meal a week didn't happen until about half way through the mission. So, for the most part we were on hard rations. So, you know, normally we would get up at day break and I would get up – I normally would go to – I had my own ops centre, my own command tent where we had, of course, all of our radios and maps and so on. I would get briefed up on whatever had occurred during the night, if I hadn't been out at night myself – which was often the case. I usually would sit down and have breakfast with my Sergeant Major and we would discuss the operations for the day, especially the support for the squadron and

how we were going to support the various operations that were going on. I would then head out with my own Cougar, often with a second Cougar essentially as a wing man 'cause we didn't operate on single vehicles. You never operated in single vehicles. So I would usually visit either the cantonment sites or go out with the patrols that were operating, and if it wasn't the one day a week that I had to go to Belet Huen – to the orders group. So I was usually out for most of the day on patrol or visiting the troops or visiting with the local commanders of both sides or visiting with the village elders of both sides. Or, eventually I got to know some of the political key figures of both sides and I would have meetings with them and we would kind of co-ordinate – especially as the relief effort became more important. And I would usually try to be back in camp around supper time again to coordinate with my Sergeant Major and my second in command what had been going on during the day. If I was lucky and I got back in time, we had – we eventually were able to set up a field shower, which was quite a luxury. We had a delivery of water in water tanks that were – we had eventually set up a water purification unit was set up in Belet Huen and it would fill water tankers and we'd get a water tanker come up once a week to deliver fresh water to the camp. That was our only source of fresh water.

INTERVIEWER: You didn't have bottled water?

KAMPMAN: We had bottled water and we had boxed water – which is kind of interesting. Certainly we would only drink – although you could drink water that came out of the water purifier, I never liked it because it tasted funny. But I know it was safe but it just has a funny taste to it. So we had bottled water. But all of the washing, cooking, everything else was done essentially out of water purification unit.

And we built our own mess tent. We built our own mess and we built our own – we had a bar – we had a shared bar for the NCOs and officers and a bar for the soldiers where you could get your two cans a beer a day per man which we followed religiously, except for one night. It was the night after the American Sergeant was killed and we had a funeral service in the camp and then I basically took off the two beer per man rule. Most of the crew commanders let her rip that night and it was probably the best way to blow off steam that I certainly had available, anyway, in those days.

INTERVIEWER: But alcohol wasn't a problem then?

KAMPMAN: No. I mean, frankly, most guys, because of the heat, didn't like drinking beer anyway. It was really not a problem in that environment.

INTERVIEWER: Now, you were on hard rations the whole time. How would you describe them in terms of their adequacy?

KAMPMAN: Well, it was – the menus were a little bit more limited back in those days. The first thing was - I guess, it was kind of funny in retrospect but it wasn't at the time – the sea containers carrying the rations had been packed, of course, back in Canada. Normally, you would mix up the breakfast, lunch and supper menus into the sea

containers. But somebody without any experience had basically packed sea containers entirely with breakfast or entirely with lunches or entirely with dinners. So the first – the only sea container with rations that was available, that could be reached in the first three weeks was all breakfasts. So for the first three weeks, all we ate was breakfast. And, of course, there were only three breakfast meals – back then. It was what we called “lung in a bag” which was the ham omelet. There was the “pork and beans” or the macaroni and cheese. So, basically, for the first three weeks we had three choices and that was it.

So we began trading with the Americans for the American rations. And, of course, there were at least twelve meals in the American rations – not as big as the Canadian but you never ate it all anyway, especially in the heat. I think in the end most guys were eating one meal a day just because of the heat – and you were never that hungry anyway. The American rations had some extra advantages to them. Number one, they came in this robust, very strong brown plastic bag which could be used for all sorts of things. In the desert the troops became very innovative in the adaptation of various things. So, for example, instead of walking around in your combat boots all the time if you took one of these plastic bags from the American rations and cut it the right way, you could make yourself a pair of pretty effective slippers to walk around in.

We had no way to do – we had no laundry service – so everybody had to do their own laundry and we didn’t have wash tubs until eventually all the gear was unloaded. So people invented ways to do laundry – like taking a cardboard ration box and then setting it up right with a garbage bag inside full of water that you could actually do your laundry inside this garbage bag. Stuff like that. It was that sort of level and by the end we had a few luxuries. We eventually had a field shower – which was a real luxury. And we eventually had wash tubs which was – I never thought of them as a luxury until you don’t have them. It was about that level throughout the whole mission. You know, plus you were constantly battling with the local flora and fauna including the largest arachnid, the largest spider in the world. The Camel Spider, also know as the Wind Scorpion, is the largest, most aggressive spider on the planet. I saw one of them clear an entire room of fully grown men [laughs]. And scorpions, normal scorpions and poisonous centipedes, poisonous snakes and all that, you know, all that part of the environment.

INTERVIEWER: Aside from the beer, were there any other amenities that soldiers received?

KAMPMAN: Except for mail and packages from home. I had, for example, my wife sent me once an entire package, an entire box full of packages of Kraft Dinner which disappeared in one night. So those types of things would show up. But that was about it. We never really had a CANEX service. There was some stuff that would come through supply system but that was about it. We didn’t have the types of facilities that we have today in Camp Julien and Afghanistan or anything like that.

INTERVIEWER: But you did mention leave. There was a two week leave. Where would the soldiers go?

KAMPMAN: Most of the soldiers went back to Canada. Some, including myself stayed out in Africa. My wife, on my two week leave period, my wife flew out to Kenya and we spent our two weeks in Kenya. But Nairobi was the R&R centre and once a month you were also supposed to get forty-eight hours of R&R. And once that kicked in, which wasn't until half way through the mission, Nairobi had been set up as the R&R centre. So we would fly out of Belet Huen by Hercules to Nairobi Airport where eventually they also set up the National Support Element which was eventually built up over time during the mission. They learned from their mistakes and by the end of the mission they had built up at least a primitive National Support Element operating out of Nairobi.

INTERVIEWER: What was the state of discipline of the soldiers? Did you have any difficulties there?

KAMPMAN: We had – overall I was very pleased with the discipline of my soldiers. The problem that we had was, in fact, with what's known today as “negligent discharges”. And I chalk that up to training. We, certainly in that period in those days, we were so painfully careful about safety around small arms and weapons that the soldiers were not used to walking around with loaded weapons and we did not, for example, we did not insist on soldiers walking around with an empty weapon. That was stupid because Somalis were walking around with loaded AKs. So we were walking around with loaded weapons with a weapon on safe. And it is a mind set that you get into – you know, you start – you eventually get used to the fact that you are walking around with a loaded weapon and, you know, you act accordingly. But in the beginning there were several cases of negligent discharges including – I had an officer who shot himself, by accident, which was the worst incident. Luckily he survived. It was simply a fact that we were walking around with – and it wasn't just personal weapons – crew-served weapons and heavy weapons that were loaded all the time.

INTERVIEWER: And it was a real transition from the whole culture...?

KAMPMAN: Yah. From the whole peace time culture of, you know, when you are on the range and they counted out the rounds and the weapon was pointed down range at all times and all that sort of stuff. From, in hindsight, a very artificial training – safe – but a very artificial training environment which was not particularly useful when it came to operating in that environment. So, we had several negligent discharges and eventually that problem went away. But at the start it was of great concern to me. And it was a real dilemma because, of course, yes, you could take measures to reduce or even eliminate the chance but you had to weigh that against the fact the operational posture of your soldiers, and the fact that you were in the middle of a war zone. So we took risks. And yah, we had some negligent discharges and, yah, some people got charged and some people got fined. But luckily for me, I didn't have anybody hurt. The Airborne had a guy shot in the head from a negligent discharge and unfortunately a death as a result.

INTERVIEWER: Now, just returning to your operations, you mentioned patrols. Were all your patrols out and back from your camp or did you ever deploy outposts?

KAMPMAN: Well, I had troop outposts at the cantonment sites. So normally the patrols were between the main base camp and Matabaan and the cantonment sites. So we had, essentially in the sector we had three bases of operations that we could use as a foot on the ground. But usually those patrols were – I guess in ninety percent – it's safe to say in ninety percent of the cases the patrols were mounted. In the other cases, we did try some dismounted patrols. The real problem with dismounted patrols in that environment was the heat combined with the amount of gear that the soldiers had to carry, especially water, to survive. And we didn't have any of the fancy gear that they have today like the camel packs and all that stuff. So, essentially, the ability of the soldiers to operate on foot was severely limited. The distance they could move was severely limited by what they had to carry just to survive, plus ammunition plus everything else. So we found that vehicle-mounted patrols were far more effective. And then, you know, using the vehicle as a base, really, if the soldiers had to get out and go and look at something. But we very quickly found out that dismounted patrols were really – long distance dismounted patrols – were simply not practical.

INTERVIEWER: Now, you mentioned earlier that Two Commando was dismounted and obviously they experienced the same problems?

KAMPMAN: Yah, they did but they were dismounted in Belet Huen which made for a different situation. They were dismounted in an urban environment and they could also – they also used vehicles from the Service Commando to go and drop off a patrol in a particular quarter of the city. There were also quarters of the city where they didn't go, that they considered to be too dangerous and didn't go.

INTERVIEWER: Can you describe the process by which your participation in the mission was ended and you turned over responsibility?

KAMPMAN: Sure. I guess it was in May – May 1993 – when we really started to get some details on what was going to happen with the end of the mission. And there was always a question of – up until then there was always a question of a rotation, whether we were going to rotate with another Canadian Force. And then we understood that, essentially, the mission was going to evolve back into a UN mission which, I guess, you could look at as a success [laughs].

But essentially what happened was that a multi-national force including Germans for the first time operating outside – since the Second World War – operating outside of the NATO theatre, but including in my sector Nigerians under UN control, moved in to take over from us. It was really kind of a shock for us because obviously we had established a security network. We had established framework patrols. We had established relations with the local people on both sides and we were quite proud of what we had achieved. And then this Nigerian company – Infantry Company – moves in to take over from us and a completely different type of force. They had no armoured vehicles. They had light trucks. They had no radios. They had small arms but they had no heavy weapons and with a completely different mandate. So you could almost have shut down the coalition mission and brought this one in from scratch because it was such a different frame work.

INTERVIEWER: And the area was deemed to be pacified?

KAMPMAN: Yah, that's right. And here we were, we had just suffered our last mine strike only two or three weeks before which had destroyed another Cougar. So operating in that kind of environment and here these Nigerians move in with these light trucks which they're basically using as section carriers and no way to coordinate their operations. Nothing more than an HF radio to communicate back to their higher headquarters and very little in the way of equipment. And essentially expecting to just take over everything that we had sitting on the ground. Which was not the case. A lot of the stuff we were taking back with us. I believe Canada sold the tentage because, frankly, it was all contaminated and you couldn't take it back to Canada anyway. So the handover was really quite bizarre because in many cases the things that we were doing, the Nigerians could not do. And the Nigerians were essentially faced with coming up with their own idea about how they were going to conduct their operation which was obviously going to be different from ours.

Very – in fact only two days prior to us leaving, one of the worst incidents we had occurred in the sector we were still responsible for – there was a major vehicle accident. In fact a truckload of – I think it was forty-five Somalis – went off the road in our sector. There were, I think, about a half a dozen dead, about twenty of them seriously injured. And it was a real wake-up call for the Nigerians. And it was only then that I discovered that the Nigerians hated the Somalis and there was this very basic lack of any kind of trust or appreciation. As far as the Nigerians were concerned, the Somalis were at the bottom of the food chain in terms of Africa and various communities and cultures and so on...

INTERVIEWER: Probably a vice-versa effect?

KAMPMAN: And they absolutely detested them [laughs]. Which was kind of shocking for me, but there you have it. So having spent all this effort and time and, you know, and blood and so on, to try to make this mission successful it was, I think, a bit of a bitter taste to see it turned over in that way with really no hope that the Nigerians were going to be able to carry on doing what we were doing. And, in fact, the events that unfolded in the following months showed that that was the case – that the UN Force was not robust enough to be able to carry on the security of the sector.

INTERVIEWER: Who took over from the rest of the battle group?

KAMPMAN: It was – I believe it was – in fact, it was the German Battalion Headquarters that took over from the battle group. But the German battalion that came in was essentially a logistics battalion that took over. They had a couple of companies of German Fallschirmjäger – parachute troops – who were very tough and very good but again, very lightly equipped – even more lightly equipped than even Two Commando was.

So we eventually rolled out of Belet Huen with everything that we could still carry on our backs – didn't even stop in Belet Huen. We rolled straight two day road trip back to Mogadishu and then spent about a week in Mogadishu cleaning up the gear and getting ready to load it onto ships and then we deployed home towards the end of June.

INTERVIEWER: How was the reception when you arrived home?

KAMPMAN: Entirely different from what you see today. We have, I think, so improved our methods of how we treat soldiers when they come home. Soldiers that come home today are treated like heroes. We arrived in the middle of the night. There was nobody to meet us – there was no representative of the government. There was no representative of the higher headquarters. We went – loaded immediately on busses and were bussed up to Petawawa. Again, arrived in the middle of the night. Met by the Brigade commander but by nobody else and that was it and the mission was over. We had to wait for four years to get the Operations Medal. Four years of inquiries and four years of questions and controversy.

INTERVIEWER: Were there any debriefings when you arrived back?

KAMPMAN: There were no debriefings. There were no social workers. There was nobody that was looking into post-traumatic stress. There was no medical support from that perspective. We all had to sign a form to try to describe what kind of medical problems we might be suffering at the time, but that was it in terms of medical examinations.

INTERVIEWER: From your knowledge, were there any serious mental problems or post-traumatic ...?

KAMPMAN: I probably had about at least a dozen soldiers suffering post-traumatic stress – including myself – I realize today. Not in a chronic sense – not in the sense of, you know, some of the people who are really suffering today – I did have some of those cases. I had probably had two or three of those cases who have all since retired from the Forces. One who was decorated for courage during the operation, who nevertheless was suffering from post-traumatic stress as a result of the same thing he was decorated for, courage for. So it was, I think, if anything, it was an indicator of how far we had to go to actually learn from the mistakes we were making and do things the right way. Which I think we are. I honestly believe we are doing things the right way today. But we had a long way to go back then.

INTERVIEWER: So how would you summarize the whole experience?

KAMPMAN: It was – Op DELIVERANCE was certainly the hardest thing that I ever did in my career. It was a huge challenge, not only from the point of view of being a leader but a challenge for the force that was there, a challenge for the Army, a challenge for the Canadian Forces. I look back on it now; we had no idea what we were doing; we had no idea. Going into an austere theatre, it was just after the end of the Cold War, it

was just after the Persian Gulf. We were used to operating in these mature theatres with massive amounts of logistic support. And to go into an austere theatre in a chaotic environment in a very, very difficult situation with robust Rules of Engagement which were in many cases very grey, and still questioned today in some respects. I think we were – we were out of our league in many respects in trying to grasp what it is that we were trying to do. We learned a lot from mistakes. We corrected as quickly and adapted as rapidly as we could during the mission. But even by the end of the mission there were a lot of shortcomings and limitations. The impact of the events in Belet Huen was profound, as I've said. It had a huge impact on the command and control of the battle group and on the way that the mission unfolded after that. And even by the end of it, we came home at the end of a mission that was by then shrouded in controversy and scandal and that had an effect on the morale of the soldiers. Because the soldiers, very rightly, were proud of what they had done. But it would take a long time before that pride could be returned by the country.

INTERVIEWER: Now, aside from the obvious lessons of the Belet Huen incidents, what do you think that the Army has learned in a positive way, and took in a positive way, from this operation?

KAMPMAN: We have very robust pre-deployment training. We have a much greater understanding of the role of cultures and cultural training in pre-deployment. We have far superior equipment than we had back then. We have very robust command and control and very robust logistic support organizations that we can now deploy rapidly. In fact, when I look at what we did in Kabul, that was world class, the organization that we put into Kabul. So we have come an enormous way. We have now got in-theatre support and post-operation support for soldiers and for families that was not there. We have far better support in theatre for – in every respect – for sustaining operations. And we now have a far better 'Lessons Learned' mechanism. And especially the Army, and I think the rest of the Forces, is coming along very quickly for making sure that the lessons we are learning are being institutionalized and internalized and being acted upon.

I think that we have learned in every respect in every aspect, and I think our ability now – if we were called on to do that mission again under the same circumstances – it would be very, very different from what we did back in 1992 -1993.

INTERVIEWER: And how about you personally? What have you taken from that...?

KAMPMAN: I think that if there is one thing that you come to appreciate, it's the human side of soldiering and the human side of combat. After, you know, you've had to face operations under fire with soldiers under your command and you really understand the loneliness of leadership. I've talked with young officers many times since and if there is one thing that I tell them is that you have to understand just how lonely it can be when everybody is looking to you.

INTERVIEWER: Interview with Mike Kampman on 16 November, 2005. Interview ends.

TRANSCRIPT ENDS