

Agencies welcome use of troops in Somalia

By Laurie Hansen
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Representatives of U.S.-based relief organizations, including Catholic Relief Services, welcomed use of military force to help in delivery of humanitarian supplies to starving Somalis.

Chaos in Somalia makes sending in troops necessary to establish "some modicum of order" so that food can be distributed, said Lawrence Pezzullo, executive director of CRS, the U.S. bishops' overseas relief and development agency.

Since Somali dictator Mohammed Siad Barre was ousted in January 1991, more than 300,000 Somalis have died from the combined effects of famine and warfare, and 2 million more are on the brink of starvation, according to U.N. officials.

Lack of security prevents CRS from getting food to as many people as it otherwise could and makes the cost of

food delivery exorbitant, said Pezzullo.

"We are flying in the food. It costs \$800 a ton to fly it in. It would cost \$50 a ton if we could ship it in," he said. He added that plane delivery limits how much food can be brought in at once.

Because of rampant pillaging, "food can't be warehoused too long because warehouses become a focal center for attack," he said.

The United States in late November offered to commit 30,000 troops to Somalia to be part of a U.N. effort to open supply lines and safeguard food distribution points.

Warring clans and gunmen have disrupted international efforts to deliver food to the hungry.

Pezzullo told Catholic News Service in a Dec. 1 interview that the situation in Somalia was "as close to chaos as you'll see. There is a complete breakdown of public order and as a result warlords, clans and sub-clans determine what you can do and where you

can go."

He said CRS had delivered some 3,000 tons of food to Somalis thus far. CRS food losses run at about 5 percent, he said, compared to 60 or 70 percent other agencies have reported stolen.

As much as half of the 200,000 tons of food delivered to Somalia from all sources has been taken by bandits. At least 12,000 tons of food were stored at port warehouses but could not be delivered because of bandits in the area.

Pezzullo said CRS workers in Somalia were under a great deal of stress. "There is so much armament, much of which is in the hands of excitable youths," said the CRS chief, who was in Somalia a month earlier.

Sharon Pauling, Africa policy

analyst for Bread for the World, told CNS that her agency welcomed Bush administration efforts to provide security forces to assure food delivery.

The numbers of people dying, she said, demanded an international response.

"Security is absolutely critical," she told CNS Nov. 30. She added, however, U.S. troops should only be sent into Somalia as part of a U.N.-led multinational force.

The U.S. offer involved sending in troops under U.S. command. U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said Nov. 30 that he would prefer military action be under U.N. command and control, but that a U.S.-led operation was one option.

Capital drive key to southeast plan

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surveys sent out, 650 were returned, Perrotta said.

Most survey respondents wanted the quadrant's schools to remain the same, but wrote that they would have to look at how the schools were reconfigured before making their decision to re-enroll their children for 1993, Perrotta said.

Philip L. Burke, president of the St. Joseph's Education Association and a vocal opponent of the single-site proposal, noted that the St. Thomas More building would make a better site for a centralized junior high than Our Lady of Lourdes. Nonetheless, he was still concerned about long bus rides or the lack of transportation for students from the quadrant's outlying areas.

"If one child is left out of the loop for transportation, that's one child too many," he said.

Perrotta reported that transportation ranked "seventh or eighth" on the list of concerns of survey respondents considering a junior high. Transportation issues are neither "better nor worse" under the current proposal than they were under the original proposal, he said.

Reaction to the plan was mixed throughout the quadrant.

Helen Lynch, principal at Good Shepherd School, thought the board's final proposal, if implemented, would put her junior-high students in a

healthy academic environment.

"I think our kids would do well in a larger setting," she said, noting that a larger facility would pool the quadrant's resources to create a quality program.

But Sister Nancy Kelly, RSM, principal of St. Joseph's School, did not share Lynch's enthusiasm for the proposal. She noted that her own school — with diocesan approval — expanded its facilities in 1989 to accommodate growing enrollment, and that the single-site plan could possibly hinder St. Joseph's enrollment.

"My fondest hope is that we would continue with a two-site junior high," she said.

In addition to the establishment of a centralized junior high, the board's proposal calls for expanding the quadrant's pre-kindergarten and day-care programs. Pre-K and day-care programs would be available at schools in Henrietta, Brighton, Webster and Rochester, with the possibility that other schools might expand their programs to include day care in the future.

Perrotta noted that data from the survey indicated a significant demand for early-childhood programs at quadrant schools.

The proposal currently awaits approval from the diocese's Christian Formation and Education Council and Bishop Matthew H. Clark. A decision is expected in January.



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