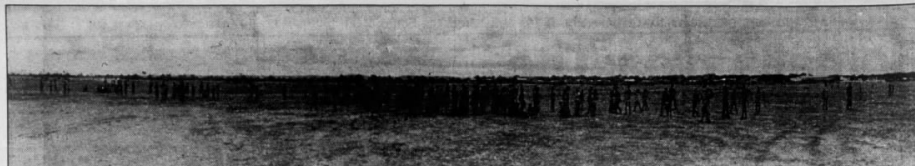


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# Insight

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Idle refugees congregate in the dust, sun-drenched vastness of an airstrip in anticipation of arrival of food supplies.

## Bay team delivers donations

By Jan Silverman  
Tribune Staff Writer

When the Bay Area Volunteer Medical Team landed in Mogadishu last week, it brought \$300,000 worth of medical supplies, food and building material, contributed to the Emergency Relief Fund in the last two months by individuals and churches in San Francisco and the Eastbay.

It may be a small amount compared to the estimated \$1.15 billion needed to tackle the enormous problem of the East African famine, but it is in the best tradition of American generosity to people in need.

And it places the Bay Area in the forefront of individual giving, ahead of any other region of the United States and exceeding many nations.

An international conference was held in Geneva, Switzerland, last weekend to address the entire problem of refugees in Africa, said to number some 5 million, half the world's total number of refugees.

About \$50 million was pledged by the nations attending with the United States pledging the most, \$23 million, a figure called "unexpectedly generous" by the London Times.

If the U.S. has been generous in giving money, it has not been outstanding in terms of sending relief workers to the African continent, with a few notable exceptions.

Since October of 1978, when UNICEF alerted the world to the growing famine in Somalia, more than 30 different medical groups brought aid from around the globe.

Oxfam, the British voluntary relief organization, was the first to respond, sending a medical team last December. World Vision in Southern California, a church-related group, was among the first American teams.

Then came the World Food Program, U.S. AID, the European Economic Community and the World Health Organization.

There have been relief workers from Spain, Sweden, Italy, France, Australia — from much of the Western world — trying to ease the anguish of an estimated 1.5 million refugees from war and drought.

But the dozens or so people who serve with Voluntary Medical Teams International, most of them from the Bay Area, now at the Bobo II refugee camp, are the only community-based American medical team working there now.

Originally asked to bring medical aid to some 20,000 refugees in Bobo II, the medical team two days ago was asked to take over for a British relief team that had been working at Bobo I, a nearby camp sheltering another 20,000 persons.

The Bay Area team now is concerned with a total of 70,000 human beings in Bobo I and Bobo



Land Rover is always an oddity to people of the Ogaden; in refugee camp, it holds the added attraction of food rations.

II, many of whom are suffering from such diseases as malnourishment, malaria and beriberi.

A United Nations International Emergency Relief official from New York marveled at how the Volunteer Medical Team can operate so efficiently with practically no overhead. U.N. agencies have been criticized for red tape and inefficiency.

The Volunteer Medical Team is attempting to stay small and keep track of its supplies in the field, avoiding the pilferage so common in larger operations.

The Bay Area team is replacing an international team based in Finland, and a group of Icelandic and British nurses covered for them until their arrival last week.

There is reported to be a Mennonite group working at one of the camps, and Save the Chil-

dren from Westport, Conn., has sent agricultural experts and water-drilling specialists.

So has UNICEF, which is also running a home training program for Somali women in Mogadishu, the capital city, right now. But UNICEF's job is more in terms of long-term development than immediate emergency relief.

Africare, based in Washington, D.C. has been in Somalia for eight months now, the Red Cross is there, and the International Rescue Committee has plans to send in a medical team.

But the Bay Area volunteers, supported by contributions from churches and individuals from both sides of the Bay, appears to be unique.

Officially called Medical Volunteers International, the group was started in 1969 during the Vietnam war by Maria Eitz, an extraordinary

German-born psychologist who now lives in San Francisco. She is still the heart of the organization, collecting supplies and coordinating efforts from her San Francisco apartment which is, incidentally, filled with abused local children who need a temporary home.

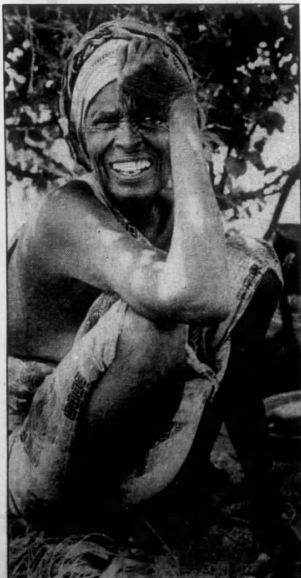
MVI was in the forefront in the Cambodian refugee efforts, training indigenous workers to take their place when they left.

The efforts of volunteers there from all over the world is credited with helping save millions of Cambodians from death.

Now their efforts are turned to Somalia.

"All of our people have prior field experience," says Eitz, "in Sri Lanka, in Saudi Arabia, but mostly in Thailand."

"Besides the Red Cross, we are the only medical team at Bobo II."



Elderly woman takes shelter from midday sun at Bobo II camp.

## Somali leader hopes for commerce

Edward J. Daly, president of World Airways and donor of the 747 flight that took the Volunteer Medical Team and its supplies to Somalia, spoke of investment opportunities in Somalia for one-and-a-half hours last week with President Siad Barre, the country's military dictator.

Daly said they spoke extensively of the opportunities for American business investment in Somalia, primarily in uranium, gold and other metals.

"He believes they're sitting on oil there, too," said Daly, dressed in a black cowboy hat and Air Force jumpsuit in his private cabin as the huge, nearly empty plane sped back to Oakland.

Though Somalia became an independent nation in 1960, the United States refused to give aid to the new country as long as it was engaging in border wars with Ethiopia. The Soviets took advantage of this situation, stepping in to offer military aid.

Barre has been president of Somalia since 1969, when a military coup overthrew the civilian government. He served during the seven years the Soviet Union and Cuba were entrenched in Somalia.

The Somalis threw the Russians and Cubans out in 1977 when they discovered they were being bombed from Ethiopia by Soviet-supplied planes.

Daly had his interview with President Barre at the same time the Oakland Tribune/Eastbay TODAY news team was being detained by police in Mogadishu.

It was a matter of taking pictures of people on the streets of the capital city, something we discovered was forbidden.

But after a long walk to the police station, a drive around town in a police car and friendly chats with several government



Ed Daly (left) and Hussein Bullaiah (far right), aide to Somali leader Siad Barre.

and police officials, we were driven back to our hotel and released.

Meanwhile, Daly and Somalia's president, whom he described as "a charming, warm, sincere individual," discussed business opportunities in the economically destitute country on Africa's horn.

"He said he'd give a white paper to American businessmen," Daly reported, "and I suggested he offer tax advantages like they have in Ireland."

Daly expressed concern for the developing country which has been "raped first by the Italians and then by the Russians, using Ethiopians and Cubans to do their dirty work for them."

He pointed out the strategic value of Somalia, with its deep sea port of Berbera on its north coast, developed by the Soviets but now with exclusive rights in the hands of the United States.

Somalia also offers anchorage rights on its east coast and a long runway airport on the north coast, Daly pointed out, strategic to the defense of the Western nations.

Daly says there are forces in Somalia that are pressing for neutrality. He said Barre assured him that he favors "the West over the East," but would like to see the West recognize the importance of his country.

Daly said the Somali president offered him the post of "consul

general from the state of California."

He said he told Barre he would study the situation and give him an answer in two weeks.

Daly is not unfamiliar with developing countries. He has had business dealings with Iran and North Yemen, and was honored by both countries.

He said they all share a basic lack of educational facilities and suffer from frequent drought and sudden heavy rains, which wreak havoc on both people and livestock.

Daly said he left Somalia "with wet eyes, a dry throat and a happy heart. If there is a God, I hope he intercedes to help these people."

— Jan Silverman