

men and the torture and murder of a Somali teenager, Shidane Arone, by a number of Canadian peacekeepers from the Canadian Airborne Regiment on duty in Somalia in March of 1993. On 4 March of that year two Somali men were shot in the back by Canadian peacekeepers, one of whom died. While an initial investigation concluded that the Airborne members had acted properly, a Canadian military doctor later reported that the dead man had been killed 'execution style' and moreover that he had been pressured to destroy his medical records concerning the murder.³⁵ On 16 March, at least two Airborne members beat Shidane Arone throughout the evening, abusing him verbally throughout with racist epithets, and by midnight he had died. Arone's murderers also photographed his ordeal, which were released in the course of courts martial proceedings in November of 1994.

The release of the very graphic and horrifying photographs of Arone's murder (the soldiers themselves called them 'trophies'), and the subsequent revelations by the Canadian military doctor that he had been pressured to cover up details of the 4 March shooting led the Canadian Minister of National Defense to call for a public inquiry into the Somalia mission. This was followed two months later by the release of two sets of videos, the first a video from the Somalia mission, portions of which portray Airborne soldiers describing the Somalia mission as 'Operation Snatch Niggers', the second a number of videos depicting the Airborne's hazing rituals which included, among other things, images of Airborne soldiers vomiting or eating vomit, being smeared with faeces, and with the single black soldier in the regiment being forced to walk around on all fours with the phrase 'I love the KKK' written in faeces on his back.³⁶

The first reaction by mainstream observers of peacekeeping to the Arone murder was to dismiss it as the act of a few 'bad apples'. The bad apple theory, moreover, was quickly linked by military apologists to problems associated with economic downsizing. As Joseph Jockel argued, the Somalia crisis was the result of a personnel shortage, itself the result of years of underfunding. Under these circumstances, for Jockel, the army 'felt compelled to send to Somalia a unit of the Canadian Airborne Regiment whose fitness for deployment was doubtful.'³⁷

The release of the Somalia and hazing videos undermined the 'bad apple' theory and suggested, at least, that the type of behaviour which led to the shootings and Arone's brutal murder was more pervasive within the Airborne Regiment, if not the Canadian military as

a whole. And importantly, it was not the shootings or the murder of Shidane Arone, but the release of the hazing video which led the Minister of National Defense to announce on 23 January 1995 that the elite Airborne Regiment would be disbanded.³⁸ As Romeo St Martin writes:

Allegations of racism, torture and murder weren't enough to bring down the Canadian Airborne unit. Even a videotape filled with racist comments was dismissed as 'bravado' by the unit's supporters. However, video of the Canadian troops frolicking in a sea of vomit, piss and shit outraged the public and was cause for swift action by Defense Minister David Collenette to disband the regiment.³⁹

A concern with a breakdown in the 'chain of command' replaced the assumption that the Somalia murders (usually referred to as 'unfortunate events') were the result of a few bad apples. It is an examination of the chain of command which is the focus of the Somalia Inquiry.

Whether it is a 'few bad apples' or problems in the 'chain of command', what we are *not* likely to see at the inquiry or any of the more traditional analyses made of it is any analysis of the ways in which these events are a product of what many feminists describe as militarized masculinity.⁴⁰ What is clear, however, is that there is ample evidence in the shootings, the murder of Arone, the various videotapes and now testimony emerging at the inquiry to support such an analysis. In addition to Arone's torture and murder and the visual evidence from the hazing videos, what has been shown in testimony, questioning and documents submitted thus far to the inquiry is that, in contrast to the notion that the Canadian military by virtue of its participation in peacekeeping missions is a quite benign, altruistic and peaceful institution, in fact, it is one in which the glorification of force, hierarchy, racism and violence against women are, like most militaries, an important part of its culture.

Within the first week of the inquiry's evidentiary hearings, for example, the Canadian public learned that military officials had allowed members of the Airborne who were either known members of racist skinhead organizations or who were under investigation for suspected skinhead and neo-nazi activity to be deployed to Somalia.⁴¹ None of the suspected skinheads were charged in Arone's murder, but considerable concern was raised that knowledge of the racist activity had been clearly documented over a year before the unit was deployed to Somalia. Indeed, those documents indicated that the