
Developing a Coordinated and Sustainable United States Strategy Toward Somalia

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As you know, Somalia finds itself embroiled in a cycle of violence and instability despite promising efforts in recent years by the international community and Somali leadership to create an inclusive and stable government. I would like to note, though, that despite the best efforts of violent extremists to overthrow the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) by force, the TFG remains standing and determined to move forward. This latest round of fighting occurs as we enter a new chapter in the recent history of international efforts to assist Somalia in solving its long-standing crisis. Since the overthrow of the Siad Barre regime in 1991, there have been several distinct approaches taken by the international community to address the many crises that have enveloped Somalia. In 1992, the international community authorized the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM I), in an effort to stave off starvation and a wider humanitarian crisis caused by civil war. This effort proved ineffective; and a second United Nations (U.N.) operation, the Unified Task Force (UNITAF), entered Somalia in December 1992 under the name Operation Restore Hope. While this operation successfully restored some order, UNITAF was eventually replaced by a third mission, also known as the UNOSOM II. It was during the United States' participation in UNOSOM II, in October 1993, that the tragic events described in *Black Hawk Down* occurred, leading to an eventual withdrawal of U.S. forces, and ultimately, the withdrawal of the majority of the international community from Somalia.

U.S. re-engagement with Somalia did not begin again until 1996, when our policy shifted to one of containment. For the next decade, U.S. policy focused on containing Somalia's problems within the country's borders so the instability did not further destabilize the region.

In 2006, the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) defeated an alliance of militias known as the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism and became the first entity since the collapse of the Barre regime to exert control over most of South-Central Somalia. This change in the balance of power in Somalia was significant, as we faced a government in Somalia that was unfriendly to the United States and harbored and provided sanctuary to a number of known terrorists. Ethiopia's intervention in late 2006 was another turning point that resulted in increased American interest in Somalia. Given the threats posed by the ICU's harboring of terrorists, the U.S. government's (USG's) Somalia strategy focused on the immediate terrorist threats.

The Djibouti Peace Process began in 2008 and led to the formation of the current Transitional Federal Government, an expanded Transitional Federal Parliament that includes members of the Djibouti faction of the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia, and the election by parliament of President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed. These are all significant steps forward for Somalia. Somalia now has at least the start of a government that is broadly representative of the Somali clan and societal landscape.

However, Somalia is clearly in crisis. Approximately 43 percent of the population of Somalia relies on humanitarian assistance to survive, and nearly 500,000 Somalis have fled their country and now live in overcrowded refugee camps throughout the region. The TFG controls only a small portion of the territory; and the vast majority of Somalia is controlled by militias, clans, or terrorist organizations. The blight of piracy off the coast of Somalia is without question a symptom of the instability and insecurity within Somalia; without stability in Somalia, there can be no long-term resolution of the piracy problem. Furthermore, al-Shabaab, a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO), continues to harbor terrorists, target civilians and humanitarian workers, and attempt to overthrow the TFG through violent means. The resolution of these problems calls for a comprehensive solution that provides stability and promotes reconciliation, economic opportunity, and hope for the Somali people.

The Obama Administration is working to address these challenges. The National Security Council (NSC) has brought together the Department of State (DOS), the Department of Defense (DOD), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the intelligence community, and a variety of other agencies to work to develop a strategy that is both comprehensive and sustainable. Such a strategy must be built around our work with international partners, including the U.N., African Union, the European Union, Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), International Contact Group on Somalia (ICG), and the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia, among others, to achieve our foreign policy goals in Somalia of political and economic stability, eliminating the terrorist threat, addressing the dire humanitarian situation, and eliminating the threat of piracy. We are also working with other states in the region, as Somalia's challenges are intertwined with other conflicts and issues throughout the Horn of Africa.

The U.S. continues to assist the TFG in the development of a Somali security sector, which is crucial for the success of governance efforts in Somalia. With Congress' assistance, we have already committed to providing \$10 million to support the creation of a National Security Force as part of this effort; and we are also working to strengthen the TFG's capacity so the U.S. and others in the international community can provide additional assistance. We are also the largest supporter of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which facilitates the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Somalia, protects key installations in Mogadishu, and provides political space for a Somali-led reconciliation process. Since the deployment of AMISOM in 2007, the U.S. has provided \$135 million for logistical and equipment support and pre-deployment training for the Burundian and Ugandan forces on the ground. We plan to continue this level of support in the future. Furthermore, the U.S. remains the largest bilateral donor of humanitarian assistance to Somalia, having provided more than \$137 million in emergency food and non-food assistance to date in FY 2010.

Unfortunately, we do not have the luxury of time in Somalia. In the past two weeks, violent extremists, including al-Shabaab and a loose coalition of forces under the banner of Hizbul al-Islam, have been attacking TFG forces and other moderates in Mogadishu in an attempt to forcefully overthrow the transitional government. We have clear evidence that Eritrea is supporting these extremist elements, including credible reports that the Government of Eritrea continues to supply weapons and munitions to extremists and terrorist elements. We have publicly warned Eritrea to stop its illegal arming of terrorists immediately, as such support threatens the stability of Somalia and of the wider region, as well as creates a serious obstacle to the possibility of a new Eritrean relationship with the U.S.

There is also clear evidence of an al Qaeda presence in Somalia. In 2008, East Africa al Qaeda operative Saleh Al-Nabhan distributed a video showing training camp activity in Somalia and inviting foreigners to travel there for training. A small number of senior al Qaeda operatives have worked closely with Al-Shabaab leaders in Somalia, where they enjoy safe haven. We have credible reports of foreigners fighting with al-Shabaab. This further underscores the importance of urgent and decisive support to the TFG and engagement with states across the region and beyond.

The collapse of the TFG would be detrimental to the long-term stability of Somalia, and it would negate the tremendous progress that has been made to date in the Djibouti Peace Process and in restoring a semblance of normalcy and peace in Somalia. The Administration is considering ways in which we and our international partners can help to support and bolster the TFG, and we will continue to support AMISOM.