

# **Exploring a Comprehensive Stabilization, Reconstruction, and Counter-terrorism Strategy for Somalia**

Hearing before the Subcommittee on African Affairs  
The Committee on Foreign Relations  
United States Senate  
February 6, 2007

Testimony by David H. Shinn  
Adjunct Professor, Elliott School of International Affairs  
George Washington University  
Former U.S. ambassador to Ethiopia and  
State Department coordinator for Somalia

I thank the subcommittee and Chairman Feingold for inviting me to participate in this hearing. This is the third occasion in five years that I have had the opportunity to present my views on Somalia before the subcommittee. On this occasion, I have been asked to discuss the current diplomatic state of play with a focus on both regional and international players.

## **The Immediate Neighbors**

Somaliland was previously known as British Somaliland and from 1960 until it unilaterally declared its independence in 1991 the northwestern region of the Somali Republic. That part of Somalia now controlled by the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) has since 1991 had three neighbors—Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somaliland—and a long Indian Ocean coastline. The TFG claims Somaliland, which has not been recognized by any state, but has wisely avoided a confrontation with the authorities in Hargeisa as it tries to consolidate its power in the former Italian Somalia. Once there is a national government in Mogadishu that is widely accepted and clearly in control of the country there inevitably will be discussions between Mogadishu and Hargeisa on the future of their relationship. In the meantime, it is advisable for the TFG to focus on more immediate challenges and leave the question of Somaliland, which is doing just fine on its own, for another day.

Somalia's two other neighbors are Kenya and Ethiopia. It was the policy of the Somali Republic beginning in 1960 to encourage the incorporation into Somalia of those parts of Kenya and Ethiopia inhabited by the Somali people. In the case of Ethiopia, this included about one-fourth of its land area in southeastern Ethiopia known as the Ogaden and Haud that borders Somalia and Somaliland. It also included the Northeastern Frontier District in Kenya that borders southern Somalia. These irredentist claims led to war on several occasions between Somalia and Ethiopia and considerable conflict along the Kenya-Somalia border. Following the collapse of the Siad Barre regime in Somalia in 1991 and the absence of an effective national Somali government, Somali calls for incorporation of this land ended.

Extremist elements in the Islamic Courts that seized power in Mogadishu last summer and then consolidated control throughout about 50 percent of the former Somali Republic revived the irredentist policy. Hassan Dahir Aweis, Chairman of the Shura of the Somali Council of Islamic Courts, on more than one occasion claimed Ethiopia's Ogaden as part of Somalia. Others in the Islamic Courts did not subscribe to these views by Aweis. His public statements on Somali-inhabited parts of Kenya were more ambiguous, but left the impression this territory should also become part of Somalia. Combined with a call by the Islamic Courts for jihad against Ethiopia, which had sent military personnel into Somalia in support of the TFG based in Baidoa, Ethiopia became increasingly concerned about the situation in Somalia. No one in the TFG has publicly suggested that Somali-inhabited land in Ethiopia be turned over to Somalia.

Following attacks by the Islamic Courts militia against the TFG and Ethiopian forces in the vicinity of Baidoa, the TFG requested and Ethiopia agreed to send significant numbers of troops into Somalia to defeat the Islamic Court militias. We all know the outcome of the Ethiopian intervention. Ethiopia appears from the beginning to have planned a brief campaign because of the high cost of the operation and the fact that a long Ethiopian presence in Somalia would further incite Somali nationalism against Ethiopia. I believe both of these reasons explain Ethiopia's desire to remove its forces quickly from Somalia or, at a minimum, pull them back to the Ethiopian-Somali border area.

The dilemma today for the TFG and the Ethiopians is the possibility of a power vacuum, especially in Mogadishu, if the Ethiopian troops leave too soon. The TFG has not yet shown it has the capacity to maintain control of the capital on its own. There is a continuing or potential threat from the remnants of Islamic Court militias, Somali warlords with personal agendas, and ordinary armed Somalis who have for years survived as hired guns or used their weapons to loot for personal gain. I would take with a grain of salt the numerous reports that warlords and others have turned in their weapons to the TFG or joined the TFG. Somalia remains awash in hand carried weapons even if some control has been obtained over the larger pieces of military equipment.

Ethiopia is no doubt weighing carefully requests from the TFG that it remains in Somalia until the arrival of an African Union "peace support" mission. (Actually this is a euphemism for a Chapter Seven peacekeeping mission.) For the reasons already noted, Ethiopia is not likely to be very sympathetic to these requests. In fact, Ethiopia probably believes that it has accomplished what it set out to do—the removal from power of the Islamic Courts and especially the destruction or scattering of armed extremists among them. Although Ethiopia clearly prefers to have a moderate, friendly, national government in power in Mogadishu, it can, if necessary, live with a return to numerous fiefdoms ruled by individual warlords. Ethiopia has an especially close relationship with TFG Prime Minister Ali Mohammed Ghedi.

Kenya has traditionally tried to play a neutral role in the Somali conflict and for years was the designated member of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to mediate the dispute. As the Islamic Courts gained power last year, Kenya

joined Ethiopia in support of the TFG but made clear that it would not send Kenyan troops into Somalia. As Ethiopia became more involved militarily in Somalia, Kenya began to return to its more neutral role. After the military defeat of the Courts, President Mwai Kibaki was one of the leaders, however, in efforts to identify troop contributors for an African peacekeeping force.

Because of the swiftness of the Ethiopian and TFG military victory over the Islamic Courts, the number of Somali refugees that might normally head towards Kenya has been mercifully small. Unless the security situation deteriorates significantly or there is a return to severe drought and/or floods, Kenya may escape a humanitarian disaster inside and along its border with Somalia. Kenya will do what it can quietly to support the TFG. It does not want to see a return to power of extremist elements of the Islamic Courts. In order to minimize refugee movements into Kenya, it prefers the creation of a moderate, Somali government that exercises firm control over the entire country.

### **The Intergovernmental Authority on Development**

In addition to Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia, members of IGAD include Uganda, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Sudan. During the past year, IGAD members have been deeply divided on the best way to deal with Somalia. Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda strongly supported the TFG. Ethiopia and Uganda continue their support while Kenya seeks to be an honest broker.

Eritrea strongly supported the Islamic Courts, primarily because the Courts posed the biggest threat to Eritrea's enemy, Ethiopia. In fact, Eritrea sent an undetermined number of military personnel to train and support members of the Islamic Court militias. The UN Monitoring Group on Somalia placed the number of Eritrean military personnel in Somalia last fall at 2,000. This figure appears to be exaggerated; a couple of hundred is probably closer to the actual figure. Eritrea also provided substantial quantities of military equipment to the Courts. Even today, there are unconfirmed reports that Eritrea continues to support remnants of the Islamic Court militias.

Djibouti, an overwhelmingly Muslim country, began 2006 as a supporter of the TFG but shifted its sympathy to the Islamic Courts after they took control of Mogadishu. It received a number of emissaries from the Courts and urged the Courts and the TFG to resolve their differences in a process chaired by Sudan as current chair of the Arab League. Djibouti seems now to be reassessing the Somali situation but should have no difficulty supporting the TFG if it can establish security throughout the country.

Sudan played its Somali cards close, in part because it was the designated mediator between the TFG and the Islamic Courts. Khartoum presided over one promising meeting last June when the Courts and the TFG agreed to recognize each other, cease military operations, and meet again to negotiate a power-sharing arrangement. That was the end of progress in the Khartoum process. Sudan almost certainly sympathized with the Islamic Courts and made clear that it was not prepared to contribute troops to an African Union peacekeeping force in Somalia.

Because of these past and continuing divisions in IGAD over Somalia, there is little prospect the organization can play a leading role in resolving ongoing differences over the short-term. If the situation clarifies in Somalia, there will be a tendency for IGAD members to mitigate their internal differences. This may allow IGAD to reengage usefully in the issue.

### **The Wider Region**

There were numerous reports last year that a variety of countries in the wider region were supporting one side, usually the Islamic Courts, or the other in Somalia. If they did not actually take sides, they showed unusual interest in a problem that, except for Yemen, was far from their borders. In addition to Yemen, engaged countries included Libya, Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Yemen has legitimate interests in Somalia because of the large number of Somali boat people who make their way to Yemen's shores. Potentially, Yemen is in a position to help bring competing Somali groups together. Egypt has long standing historical interests along the Somali Coast and is always concerned about developments involving Ethiopia, which is the source of 86 percent of the Nile water reaching the Aswan Dam. Dubai in the UAE serves as the financial center for both Somalia and Somaliland. Before the defeat of the Courts, Qatar may have been trying to play a mediating role. There has been a history of money from Saudi private sources and government supported Islamic charities finding its way to both legitimate and illegitimate Islamic causes in Somalia. Libya and Iran just seemed to be meddling because Somalia offered an opportunity.

With the defeat of the Islamic Courts, most of these countries with the notable exception of Yemen and the UAE, which continues to serve as a Somali financial center, have shown less engagement in Somali affairs. The involvement last year of all these countries illustrates, however, the potential to return to Somali affairs quickly if they find it in their interest or just want to meddle.

### **The African Union and the Arab League**

The primary role of the African Union (AU) has been an effort to deploy an African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) for a period of six months. A 19 January 2007 communiqué of the AU Peace and Security Council reiterated the AU's commitment to the unity, sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Somalia. It called for an all-inclusive and genuine process of dialogue and reconciliation. The AU envisages that AMISOM will consist of nine infantry battalions of 850 personnel each supported by maritime coastal and air components, appropriate civilian personnel, and a police training team. This mission is expected to evolve into a UN operation after six months that will support the long-term stabilization of post-conflict reconstruction in Somalia. The model for the operation is the AU mission in Burundi. The AU urged the UN Security Council to consider authorizing a UN operation in Somalia that would take over from AMISOM at the expiration of its six months mandate. The UN seems inclined to oblige.

Each day there are new press accounts about African countries that have committed, are considering, or rejected the contribution of troops for the standing up of AMISOM. Most of the contributing countries seem to have attached conditions such as approval only after ratification by its legislative body. Malawi's defense minister reportedly promised troops only to have the president rescind the announcement. It is not clear at this writing which countries are irrevocably providing troops for AMISOM, although contingents from Uganda and Nigeria seem the most promising. Estimates suggest AMISOM will cost \$34 million each month. The U.S. has promised \$14 million to support the force and the airlift of African troops to Somalia. It is not clear if the cost of airlifting troops will come out of the \$14 million. The European Union has released 15 million Euros to finance the peacekeeping operation.

There is still no date for the arrival of the first troops and it is apparent most potential African troop contributing countries are concerned about the situation on the ground and whether they will be entering a friendly or hostile environment. The bad experience of the much larger and better equipped U.S.-led United Task Force (UNITAF) in 1992-1993 and the UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II), which took over from UNITAF and remained until 1995, has not been lost on African troop contributors. It is not realistic to expect there will be a fully equipped and staffed AMISOM on the ground anytime soon. The African Union deserves considerable credit for what it is trying to accomplish in Somalia, but it must also face reality.

The Arab League had an opportunity to make a real contribution to the establishment of peace in Somalia, an Arab League member. Under the chairmanship of Sudan, the Arab League started well with the June 2006 agreement in Khartoum between the Islamic Courts and the TFG. But as the Courts gained power and extended their authority in Somalia, the Arab League seemed to lose interest in the reconciliation process. If the Arab League had pressed the Islamic Courts harder to engage in meaningful dialogue with the weak TFG, it might have been possible to avoid a war and to create a government of national unity that included both the TFG and the Courts. Admittedly, this would have left open the possibility of extremists, some of whom have ties to international terrorism, remaining in positions of authority. There is obviously no room for extremists or supporters of terrorism in a Somali government. Close collaboration between the TFG and the moderates in the Islamic Courts might have been able, however, to solve this dilemma. With the defeat of the Islamic Courts, the Arab League seems to have abdicated responsibility for Somalia.

### **The United Nations and the International Community**

UN resolution 1725 on Somalia adopted by the Security Council on 6 December 2006 has been largely overtaken by events as a result of the Ethiopian and TFG military victory. The resolution urged dialogue between the TFG and the Islamic Courts and authorized IGAD and the AU to establish a protection and training mission in Somalia known as IGASOM. The 19 January 2007 AU communiqué has effectively replaced the UN resolution. The AU, the UN and the international community are now supporting the establishment of AMISOM, which has replaced IGASOM. Presumably the UN Security

Council will propose a new resolution on Somalia that takes account of the very different situation on the ground and the more recent AU communiqué. The UN Security Council on 2 February 2007 urged the AU to send peacekeepers to Somalia quickly so that Ethiopia could withdraw its forces. It also supported the deployment of a UN technical assistance mission to Somalia to make recommendations on security needs.

The non-African parties most engaged in efforts to find a solution to the situation in Somalia have been the European Union and the U.S. Both the EU and the U.S., but especially the EU, have emphasized the need for creation of a broad-based Somali government and reconciliation with disaffected elements of Somali society, including moderate elements of the Islamic Courts and civil society organizations. TFG President Abdullahi Yusuf has agreed to the holding of a reconciliation conference, although no place or date has been set. There are also unsettling reports from other elements of the TFG that raise questions about its commitment to this objective.

The enormous amount of energy being devoted by the AU and the international community to the raising of a peacekeeping force for Somalia would be better spent in convincing, no demanding, that the TFG and other parties begin immediately a serious process that leads to power sharing. This should be the highest priority of the international community, including the UN, AU, Arab League, EU and U.S. If meaningful talks get underway soon, it will reduce the likelihood of conflict or violence and increase the possibility that African troops can enter the country peacefully. This should be a Somali-driven reconciliation process that ideally takes place in Mogadishu. There is no longer a time or place for another Somali peace conference in three star hotels in foreign countries. The outcome may well result in a restructuring of the Somali parliament and ministries, which are far too numerous, and will certainly involve sharing power with some elements of Somali society that are poorly represented in the TFG.

The alternative may well be a phantom African peacekeeping force that arrives too late to achieve any real purpose in Somalia. In any event, the TFG probably envisages AMISOM as tantamount to a praetorian guard to keep it in power. The TFG must prove to the Somali people that it is prepared to win their respect and support. Only then will there be a meaningful role for AMISOM and only then will the TFG be in a position to create a national government that has long-term prospects for survival. Its ability to govern will be sharply limited and its longevity highly doubtful if it remains dependent on the presence of foreign troops.

The beginning of a meaningful reconciliation process should serve as the signal to the international community to increase substantially its humanitarian and development assistance to Somalia. The U.S. has been especially generous in providing humanitarian aid while the EU has been somewhat more forthcoming with development and reconstruction activities. UN specialized agencies such as the World Food Program, UNDP, and UNICEF have done most of the heavy lifting in recent years. Real progress on Somali reconciliation should result in much more effort by all international partners.