

Evaluating U.S. Policy Objectives and Options on the Horn of Africa

**Testimony Before the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Subcommittee on African Affairs**

March 11, 2008

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Introduction

Good morning, Chairman Feingold, distinguished Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about the situation in the Horn of Africa, and the Department of Defense's activities in the region.

Africa, and the Horn of Africa in particular, is a region of great strategic importance to the United States. At the crossroads of Sub-Saharan Africa and the Near East, the Horn presents a series of complex threats to U.S. national security, including weak governance, lawlessness, territorial disputes, and safe havens for terrorism. If ignored or unaddressed, all of these issues will have dire consequences for the people of the Horn, for the broader region, for our friends and Allies on the continent, and for the United States. We believe that a coordinated U.S. foreign and national security policy in the Horn of Africa, of which our defense relations are a component, is of critical importance to U.S. strategic and security interests.

Department of Defense in the Horn

The Department of Defense's activities in the Horn are a subset of the U.S. national strategy for Africa, as outlined by the President in National Security Presidential Directive 50, and support the Department of State's foreign policy goals of countering terrorism and building local capacity. Our activities with African partners focus on issues of mutual strategic concern, including the

elimination of terrorist safe havens, prevention of arms and human trafficking, and ensuring enduring access to land and sea lanes of communication. We address these security interests by working with African partners to promote civilian control and defense reform, and to build local military capacity. This is achieved by ensuring their militaries are appropriately sized and funded, by professionalizing militaries through training to develop and maintain well-trained and disciplined forces with a respect for law and human rights, and by building capacity of African partner militaries that positively contribute to combating terrorism, and that prevent and respond to national and regional crises.

Theater security cooperation remains the cornerstone of our strategy to enhance partner capabilities and to promote these relationships and common interests. Within the Horn, our engagement and activities are governed by the realities of regional instability and our bilateral relationships.

Ethiopia

The security situation in Ethiopia remains challenging and complex, with profound regional implications.

One area of significant concern is the on-going border dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Both Ethiopia and Eritrea dedicate a significant portion of military resources and efforts to manning the border region, and we remain concerned about the possibility for renewal of hostilities along the border. We believe that any return to conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea would undermine stability throughout the entire region.

Beyond the border, Ethiopia is facing genuine security concerns in the Ogaden region. The Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) continues to wage a separatist movement in the Ogaden region with outside support, including from

neighboring Eritrea. Following the April 2007 attack that killed nine Chinese oil workers and more than 70 Ethiopians, the Government of Ethiopia increased its operations in a coordinated counterinsurgency campaign in the region. As a result, we have seen increased military operations coupled with restrictions on commercial traffic and humanitarian access. We continue to monitor the situation in the Ogaden, but given that we no longer have the level of access that we previously had to the region, we are unable to confirm the actual facts on the ground. We are, however, acutely aware that for a counterinsurgency campaign to be successful, the military must respect the local civilian populace.

We continue to pursue a strategic bilateral relationship with Ethiopia and the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF), a partner in regional counter-terrorism activities. We believe that promotion of a professional ENDF, committed to human rights and rule of law, is best achieved through engagement, rather than isolation, and we have invested in training and supporting the professionalization of the Ethiopian forces. Our engagement with the Government of Ethiopia and the ENDF emphasizes our expectation that any military partner of the United States is to behave in a professional manner with full respect for the rule of law and citizens' rights. Our training engagement is particularly important with the ENDF, a 200,000-person military that is professionalizing and restructuring into a more conventional force. This transformation has been challenged and made all the more necessary by the border conflict, the counterinsurgency campaign in the Ogaden, and Ethiopia's military activities in Somalia.

Our relationship with the ENDF includes military education, counter-terrorism capability development, and funding for equipment purchases and maintenance to support the ENDF's modernization. Our security assistance office in Addis works closely with the Embassy to ensure our assistance complies with Leahy Law

requirements. Until last year, the U.S. conducted military to military training in basic soldiering and commando skills at small outposts in central Ethiopia. All of this training emphasized the rule of law. While this training ceased in 2007 at the request of the Ethiopian government, we continue our activities at the Ethiopian Command and Staff College, where we have two uniformed instructors who have trained over 120 mid- and senior-level Ethiopian military officers. We believe that continued robust security cooperation, including military to military training, is critical to the development of the ENDF and to U.S. foreign and national security policy in the region.

Eritrea

Although we currently do not have a bilateral relationship with the Eritrean Defense Forces (EDF), we believe there are areas of strategic security interest to the United States, including maritime security in the crucial shipping lanes in the Red Sea and the transformation of the EDF from a guerilla force to a smaller, professional military. Since the closure of our Security Assistance Office in Asmara in early 2006, based on indications from the Government of Eritrea that it no longer wished to maintain a bilateral military relationship, we have had little to no contact with the Eritrean forces.

The Government of Eritrea continues to undermine security in the Horn of Africa by supporting destabilizing elements in the region. We are concerned about Eritrea's actions, including the decision in November 2007 to deny the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) the right to purchase or import fuel, *de facto* forcing UNMEE's current relocation of forces out of the TSZ and into Asmara. We continue to monitor the situation with UNMEE, and particularly whether UNMEE, now that it has started to withdraw from Eritrea, will be allowed to take with it all its equipment. If UNMEE were not allowed to take its

equipment out of the country, Eritrea in essence would receive a windfall of military equipment left by departing UN troops.

Somalia

Another area of concern for us is the situation in Somalia. Although we have no bilateral military cooperation with the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), we are watching the security situation in Somalia and the implications of its continued instability for the region as a whole.

Although recent efforts of the new TFG Prime Minister to reach out to elements of the opposition appear promising, there are serious and on-going concerns about the security situation throughout Somalia. There is sporadic violence between Somaliland and Puntland forces. The lack of a representative security force impedes the TFG's efforts to extend its authority and control over all of Somalia, including portions of Mogadishu and the southern border area. Terrorist and extremist elements, including the al Qaeda-affiliated al-Shabaab militia, continue to exploit TFG weaknesses and are attempting to undermine any efforts towards a peaceful dialogue process and seek a safe haven in Somalia.

The ability of al Qaeda operatives and their affiliates to continue to use Somalia as a base for operations is a real and severe threat not only to Somalia, but to the entire region and to the United States. We continue to work with our partners, particularly Djibouti, Kenya and Ethiopia, to develop a regional counter-terrorism capability to respond to terrorists and extremist elements in Somalia that threaten U.S. interests and the security of the region. Security assistance, including through traditional funding streams like foreign military financing (FMF) and international military education training (IMET), and the DoD 1206 authority, have allowed us to support partners as they develop the capability to respond to the terrorist threat emanating from Somalia. Kenya's progress in developing a

counter-terrorism capability, with U.S. assistance, has been critical to regional security. Continued and increased assistance to these front-line states is crucial to ensuring that the instability in Somalia does not impact its neighbors. There also may be opportunities to make progress in Somalia by working with those parts of Somalia, including Somaliland, that are relatively stable. In addition to our partner relationships, the U.S. also has on-going operations in the region that respond to the presence of identified al Qaeda terrorists in Somalia.

Summary

We remain committed to promoting security and stability in the Horn of Africa, and believe this is in the best interests of the people and governments of the region, and of the United States. The Department of Defense's relations and policies in the region are subordinate to our foreign and national security policies, and consequently we continue to support and work closely with the Embassies and USAID missions in the region to ensure our activities are consistent with and support U.S. foreign policy objectives in the Horn.

Thank you, and I would be happy to take your questions.