

‘Exploring a Comprehensive Stabilization, Reconstruction
and Counter-Terrorism Strategy for Somalia’

Hearing before the Subcommittee on African Affairs
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate

Tuesday 10:00 am, February 6, 2006
Room 628 Dirksen Senate Office Building

J. Stephen Morrison
Director, Africa Program
Center for Strategic and International Studies
Washington, D.C.

Introduction

Senator Feingold, Africa Subcommittee chairman, and Senator Sununu, ranking minority, I commend you both for holding this timely hearing, and I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the discussions here today.

When we last gathered here, on July 11, 2006, it was to discuss what the U.S. strategy should be towards Somalia, after the Islamist Courts had routed the U.S.-backed warlord coalition in May of 2006. Six months later, we are gathered to consider what strategy makes sense now that the Courts have been vanquished by the Ethiopians, with U.S. support.

The wheel has certainly turned, and U.S. engagement has been enlarged conspicuously on several fronts, following a fallow period of virtual non-engagement dating back to the spring of 1994.

Diplomatically, Secretary Rice has herself weighed in directly at key moments, while Assistant Secretary Frazer has been very active in Washington, in the Horn of Africa, and in Europe. Materially, the administration put on the table a \$40 million assistance package for Somalia that for the first time in over twelve years reintroduces U.S. commitments to peacekeeping, reconstruction and development in Somalia. On the security front, U.S. forces have been engaged directly in the air and on the ground in targeting terror suspects implicated in the August 1998 bombing of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania and the November 2002 attacks on an Israeli tourist hotel and airliner. In combination, these constitute a dramatic shift in the U.S. posture towards Somalia.

We also see heightened interest in Somalia in other settings. Congress, thanks in no small measure to your leadership, Senator Feingold, has become very active on a promising bipartisan basis in support of expanded U.S. leadership on Somalia. The U.S. media and the U.S.-based Somali diaspora community have each become highly engaged. Here in

Washington, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, in partnership with the U.S. Institute for Peace and the Council on Foreign Relations, launched in the fall of 2006 a very active Working Group on Somalia, as a direct outgrowth of the SFRC African Subcommittee July 2006 hearing, and with the support of your able staff, Grey Frandsen.

The CSIS Working Group's January 17 conference, at which Senator Feingold, Assistant Secretary Frazer, several prominent Mogadishu and Kenya-based experts spoke, was attended by over 200 and widely reported in the media. Its success hinged also on the contributions made by my colleagues at CSIS, most notably John Hamre, Jennifer Cooke and David Henek, and generous input from David Smock, U.S. Institute for Peace, Princeton Lyman, Council on Foreign Relations, and Howard Wolpe, Woodrow Wilson International Center. The body of my testimony today is a distillation of what was learned at the January 17 conference.

Before I turn to the January 17 conference, I wish to emphasize that in several important respects, what was needed in July 2006 in terms of a U.S. strategy is still very much needed today. What is different is the visibility and urgency of what is required.

Most fundamentally, the United States continues to be under pressure to define a coherent strategy that is grounded in realism, caution, and patience. It continues to lack a clear vision backed by a functioning interagency process that bridges the United States' 'hard' counter-terrorism equities with its 'soft' power interests in promoting a negotiated, broadened compact for governing Somalia, meeting dire humanitarian needs, and beginning reconstruction efforts. As in other parts of the world where U.S. counter-terrorism interests are strongly at play, it is becoming clear in the Somalia context just how operationally difficult it is to integrate effectively the 'hard' and 'soft' dimensions of U.S. influence and to explain how those fit within multilateral processes. Much more can, and should be done in this critical sphere. So long as integration between 'hard' and 'soft' is lacking, there will be substantial confusion in the region and beyond regarding U.S. intentions.

Similarly, we continue to confront the profound weaknesses of the internal parties in Somalia and the urgent need to systematically test the Transitional Federal Government and to engage and test representatives of the Islamic courts. Establishing viable governance within Somalia remains the sine qua non for future progress. Our diplomatic presence inside Somalia is nil, but we do have important access to Somali leaders, including Islamists in Kenya and elsewhere, and we have the ability to lay out how U.S. support can be structured to support improved governance.

Although there is very active planning and discussion around the possible future deployment of an AU 8,000 person force to replace the Ethiopian military, the picture today is not substantially different from July. *There is simply little prospect that an external African Union force will enter Somalia soon that will be able to shape the security situation on the ground substantially.* We need to think and focus our actions on

priorities such as security in and around Mogadishu, and avoid chasing an unrealizable goal that distracts us from what is really feasible and urgently required.

As in July, the United States continues to need stronger U.S. diplomatic capacities and enhanced leadership in multilateral channels, especially the UN Security Council. An integral part of that continues to be the need for a broad and aggressive diplomatic effort aimed at expanding the Somali Contact Group and pressuring Saudi Arabia, Yemen, the Emirates, Egypt, and Eritrea to curb materiel and financial support to radical Islamists and warlords.

Outcomes of the January 17 conference at CSIS

On January 17, 2007, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, in collaboration with the Council on Foreign Relations, the U.S. Institute of Peace, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center, hosted a major conference in Washington D.C. titled *Somalia's Future: Options for Diplomacy, Assistance, and Peace Operations*. The conference brought together expert observers from Mogadishu, senior U.S. policymakers, representatives from humanitarian assistance organizations, and regional analysts to convey to a U.S. audience the current situation in Somalia and lay out the challenges before the United States and the broader international community.

Conference participants agreed there is a *window of opportunity for the United States*, in collaboration with Somalis and the broader international community, to effect positive change in Somalia, but that this window may close in the near future. After 12 years of policy disengagement that followed the failed U.S. military intervention of 1993, the United States has an opportunity to forge a forward-looking, comprehensive strategy to address immediate security concerns and the longer-term threat of regional instability. In your opening speech at the conference, Senator Feingold, you summarized the challenge:

We cannot allow our past to overshadow the pressing security concerns we face in the [Horn of Africa] today. We have an opportunity to help the Somali people dig themselves out of almost two decades of chaos and to strengthen U.S. national security at the same time. But if our government does not move quickly and aggressively on all fronts, we can be sure Somalia will continue to be a haven for terrorist networks and a source of instability that poses a direct threat to the United States.

Key Findings: The Situation in Mogadishu

1. Great uncertainty persists. Regional experts and speakers from Somalia described the great uncertainty that currently pervades Mogadishu and the highly tenuous position of the newly empowered Transitional Federal Government. Major unknowns include the possible emergence of a dual insurgency, emanating at once from alienated clan militias and from ideologically driven “jihadi” fighters, remnants of the radical core of the defeated Union of Islamic Courts (UIC). Unclear also is the nature of links between the UIC’s radical leadership,

now dispersed in Southern Somalia, Kenya, and the Saudi peninsula, and Islamist networks within Mogadishu.

2. *The Transitional Federal Government (TFG) continues to lack capacity and legitimacy.* It is unpopular and fragile, and today sits precariously in Mogadishu, installed and protected by Ethiopian military forces, who have indicated their intent to withdraw within weeks and reportedly begun that process in earnest. The conditions that allowed the Islamic Courts to emerge and win local support in Mogadishu—notably the alienation of the Hawiye clan from the structures of the TFG and the utter lack of security and basic services—today remain very much intact.

3. *The TFG has thus far failed to enlarge its governing coalition.* It is internally fractured, and has sent decidedly mixed signals on its willingness to broaden its base of support and legitimacy. Its leadership has held some consultations with clan elders, members of civil society, and former Somali presidents, and TFG President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed has recently committed to a national reconciliation conference, but there is little evidence that these consultations have resulted in an enlarged governing coalition.

The dismissal on January 17 of Parliamentary Speaker Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan, who opposed Ethiopia's military intervention and called for talks with former leaders of the UIC, does not bode well for unity and tolerance within the TFG or broader reconciliation with remnants of the Islamist movement. The TFG's imposition of martial law, temporary closure of media outlets, and forceful disarmament of local residents, has left Mogadishu residents uncertain and nervous. As yet the government has not made a clear distinction between those among the UIC leadership whom it considers criminal and the many residents of Mogadishu who supported the courts for their security and services they provided.

4. *Mogadishu's security has deteriorated since the removal of the security network created by the Islamic Courts.* Targeted killings, abductions, and revenge killings are reportedly on the rise. Mogadishu residents, their expectations raised by the success of the courts in providing local security, now look to the TFG for an equivalent level of order. The TFG is currently incapable of providing security, and, until it can forge some agreement with local Mogadishu groups, must rely on Ethiopian or other external forces who may be introduced in the future to replace departing Ethiopian troops. The greatest potential flash point for conflict remains in Mogadishu, and success or failure of stabilization efforts there will determine Somalia's future.

5. *Ethiopian forces have not created the basis for security. They are a lightning rod. Their withdrawal will be treacherous.* The presence of Ethiopian troops in Mogadishu is highly divisive, and even if they currently provide some level of security, the longer they remain in large numbers, the more they will generate popular antagonism and resentment. Ethiopia, having successfully eliminated its principal security threat by vanquishing the UIC, has little stake in the longer,

more difficult task of stabilizing Mogadishu. Given Ethiopia's eagerness to leave and the difficulty of quickly mustering adequate numbers of African Union troops, the handover of security operations will be fraught with risk and difficulty.

6. Islamism remains popular and legitimate, and will be essential to any stable governing arrangements. Although the UIC as a political entity has dissolved, political Islam remains very much alive and will need to be accorded a role in deciding Somalia's future political dispensation. Islamic charities, businesses, and networks remain among the most robust and enduring. Mogadishu clan and business networks could become significant spoilers in the reconciliation process, but could also become powerful allies in restoring basic core services and local authority.

7. U.S. counter-terror strikes and the U.S. embrace of Ethiopia are highly controversial and have high costs at the popular level within Somalia and across the region. Still at large are the three "high-value" al Qaeda associates accused of organizing the 1998 embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam and the 2003 hotel and airline attacks in Mombasa, Kenya. The three were allegedly given shelter by UIC leadership and were the principal targets of two successive U.S. air strikes in southern Somalia in January 2007. The status of current U.S. efforts to track down these three individuals and their supporters is unclear, but the air strikes have confirmed in the minds of many Somalis and regional actors that a close strategic alliance exists among the United States, Ethiopia, and the TFG, and that U.S. security interests predominate, at the expense of 'soft' interests such as reaching a negotiated internal compact, and addressing humanitarian and reconstruction needs. For this reason, U.S. air strikes remain highly controversial, both in Somalia and among European partners, and feed regional suspicions of U.S. intentions, motives, and commitment to long-term stability. An aggressive U.S. diplomatic strategy will be essential to counteract these sentiments.

Priority Recommendations for U.S. Policy

High risks of regression. The United States, in concert with other Western, African and Middle East powers, will need to act quickly to avert worst case scenarios: an absolute vacuum of authority in Mogadishu; a dual insurgency led by clan militias and "jihadi" extremists; a worsening humanitarian catastrophe; and regional destabilization. But the United States will also need to be cautious in sequencing and calibrating actions for greatest effect.

Humility, and overcoming constraints. Further, the United States will need to approach Somalia with a degree of humility. After a decade of disengagement, the United States operates from a tremendous deficit, in terms of policy, institutional capacities, credibility, and leverage over key players. It lacks real-time knowledge and enduring relationships on the ground, and has no full-time senior-level leadership in Washington or the region

charged with directing policy. Beyond humanitarian assistance, which has averaged \$90 million annually and sustains approximately 700,000 Somalis, the U.S. government has lacked serious funding to leverage its aims in Somalia, although the commitment by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice for an initial down-payment of \$40 million to support security operations, humanitarian assistance, and state development is a promising opening for expanded engagement and high-level attention.

Priorities for U.S. policy in the near term will be to:

1. Press the Transitional Federal Government to resolve its internal differences and to begin immediately a genuine process of dialogue and reconciliation.

A first priority must be to create internal governing structures that have some prospect of hope and legitimacy. The United States and its international partners must make clear that confidence in—and support for—the TFG will hinge on a demonstrated commitment to build and broaden its base of support, and begin a process of reconciliation with those groups who have been alienated and excluded. There are local authorities within Mogadishu—the business community, clans, local Islamic courts and charities—who can assist the TFG in rebuilding security and basic services and reassuring local residents. The TFG cannot afford to alienate these groups and should make every effort to earn their cooperation.

U.S. leverage resides not only in its promise of institutional and security support for the TFG, but also in U.S. access and ongoing dialogue with Nairobi-based elements of the UIC leadership, in particular Sheik Sharif Sheik Ahmed, former chair of the Executive Council of Islamic Courts. The U.S. government has made clear to the TFG that it considers Sheik Sharif a moderate who can play a vital role in reconciling Somali factions.

2. Maintain realistic expectations of an African Union-led peacekeeping operation.

No amount of external peacekeeping forces will have a chance of success in Mogadishu unless a genuine and credible process of reconciliation and political dialogue is under way. Mogadishu's best hope for security hinges on the TFG's success in winning cooperation from local clans and business networks to provide a modicum of authority and order. In the absence of clearly defined conditions or a genuine political dialogue by the TFG, African Union forces will fuel popular resentment and possibly feed an incipient insurgency. Even a full contingent of 8,000 AU troops will be spread very thin in Mogadishu and will be at strong risk of failure and attack. The international community must remain highly sensitive to this fact as it urges African countries to contribute personnel.

Mounting an adequate AU peacekeeping force will not happen quickly, even in the best of circumstances, and the international community should be prepared for the possibility of a sharp spike in violence in Mogadishu, should there be a gap between Ethiopian withdrawal and AU deployment. The African Union, the international

community, and the Somali people will need a clear and common understanding of the mandate, mission, and scope of the operation, which must be achievable both militarily and politically. The African Union is not likely to be able to muster the full 8,000 personnel any time soon, and even with the full contingent will need to set clear and achievable priorities for deployment. Efforts must be centered in Mogadishu, and within the city may have to be limited to protecting critical infrastructures.

3. Urge the UN Security Council to elevate Somalia as a priority and identify an overarching diplomatic structure that can convene all relevant international players

The United States should urge the UN Security Council and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to refocus its attention on Somalia, elaborating the commitments outlined in UN Resolution 1725, reenergizing the Somalia Panel of Experts, and making clear to the TFG its expectations for dialogue and governance. The United States should also urge the expansion of the International Contact Group for Somalia to bring in international partners who have the necessary clout, commitment, and neutrality to be helpful. A number of Arab countries, notably Qatar, United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia, have considerable leverage in Somalia and long-standing engagement in the social services sector. Currently Tanzania is the only African member of the International Contact Group, and both the African Union and League of Arab States have observer status. International efforts will need careful coordination, and the United States for the time being will need to play a discreet but transparent role.

4. Ensure robust and sustainable resources to back expanded U.S. engagement

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has committed an initial \$40 million for Somalia, a small amount in the context of Somalia's requirements, but nonetheless a strong signal that the United States is overcoming a decade of entrenched aversion and is prepared to actively reengage. Over time, however, there will be a need for reliable and secure funding flows in order for the U.S. government to leverage its long-term policy aims. Senator Feingold has suggested a Somalia "trust fund" to support disarmament and demobilization efforts, infrastructure projects, capacity building and jobs creation. This model could help ensure a sustained and predictable support flow for Somali reconstruction that will endure beyond the current spike in public and administration attention to Somalia.

5. Build U.S. institutional capacities

Policymakers should take advantage of the current resurgence of interest in Somalia and the convergence of opinion between the State Department and Congress to build U.S. capacities for a sustained and comprehensive approach to Somalia. A first step should be to significantly expand Somalia-specific analytic and reporting capacity in the U.S. embassy in Nairobi. The U.S. should engage the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa in training, security sector reform, capacity-building, police training and maritime security, although clearly this will need to be done carefully and in close coordination with other U.S. agencies and international partners. The U.S. can increase

its humanitarian flows and work to enhance the coordination of international humanitarian efforts, leveraging the enduring networks, legitimacy, and community reach of a number of operating agencies. Finally, the U.S. can increase its investment in longer-term institution building: in health, education, local authorities and those elements of the TFG that demonstrate some commitment to inclusivity and service delivery.

6. Appoint a senior-level figure to coordinate U.S. policy efforts

Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer has devoted considerable attention and energy to the crisis in Somalia, as has U.S. Ambassador to Kenya Michael Ranneberger. Their efforts and energy are to be commended and should be bolstered by the appointment of a senior-level figure to manage U.S. interagency efforts and cooperation with international partners on a day-t-day basis. The stakes for U.S. interests are sufficiently high, and the diplomatic circumstances more than adequately complex to warrant the appointment of a fully-empowered and resourced coordinator who will report to the Assistant Secretary. Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte should add the Horn of Africa to his priority regions for engagement and transformational diplomacy.

7. Encourage unity within the U.S. Somali Diaspora

The Somali Diaspora within the United States is well-placed and eager to play a significant role in rebuilding a stable and secure Somalia. Some sources estimate that remittances to Somalia from the Diaspora community worldwide may be as high as \$1 billion annually. And as demonstrated at the CSIS conference, the Diaspora community remains highly engaged and passionate about Somalia's future. In many ways clan divisions in Somalia are reflected in U.S. Diaspora communities. But many Somali Americans clearly grasp that no one clan or grouping can dominate the Somali political scene for long and that only through broad-based coalitions is there the possibility of sustained peace. There are a number of efforts currently under way to bridge the divisions among diaspora communities. Should the Somali Diaspora community come together behind a common set of priorities and goals, they could prove a powerful force in moving and sustaining effective U.S. engagement in Somalia.

Senators Feingold and Sununu, I am grateful for the opportunity to share these thoughts with you today, and am grateful for the leadership and interest you have shown on this important matter. Somalia, and the Horn of Africa, matter significantly in multiple ways to U.S. national interests, and Congress is well-positioned to help enhance the good the United States can achieve in the Horn, and to avoid the mistakes of the past. I hope my comments have been helpful, and look forward to continuing to collaborate closely with you and your staff.