

# CRS Report for Congress

## Somalia: Background and U.S. Involvement Through the 1990s

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## **Summary**

Since the withdrawal of the U.S. and U.N. missions in Somalia, violence between militias loyal to different warlords has continued, mostly in Mogadishu. In other regions of the country, however, particularly in the northwest and northeast, institutions are beginning to function at the local level. Several peace initiatives have been undertaken, most notably by the governments of Ethiopia and Egypt, which have given rise to optimism in spite of repeated delays in negotiations. Recently, however, humanitarian conditions in Somalia have deteriorated. The United Nations warns that food shortages and drought could once again lead to widespread famine, particularly in light of the difficulty in distributing food to the entire population because of security concerns and continued factional fighting.

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# Somalia: Background and U.S. Involvement Through the 1990s

## Background

Somalia, one of the poor nations of over 7 million people in the Horn of Africa, gained its independence on June 1, 1960, in a merger of the former British and Italian Somalilands. Despite a relatively homogenous population that is over 90% Somali, and the Sunni Islam faith shared by most citizens, post-independence Somalia has been characterized by successive conflicts. Internal conflict has resulted largely from warfare among and within the five major clan groups in Somalia: the Dir, the Isaq, the Hawiye, the Darod, and the Rahanweyn. External conflicts were partly attributable to a nationalist desire for a greater pan-Somalia encouraged by former dictator Mohammed Siad Barre. Somalis make up not only the bulk of the population in Somalia itself, but are also a key group in Djibouti and are found in the neighboring countries of Kenya and Ethiopia.

The dominant figure in post-independence Somali politics was President Mohammed Siad Barre, who held power for twenty-two years. Barre led Somalia on a socialist path and allied Somalia with the Soviet Union. The relationship disintegrated in 1977 when Somalia went to war with Ethiopia, and the Soviet Union supported the Marxist regime in Addis Ababa. After winning the early battles, Somalia lost the war when its army was overpowered by Ethiopian forces supported by Yemeni and Cuban troops. After Somalia split with the Soviet Union, the U.S. began providing military and economic assistance in exchange for American access to naval and air facilities. U.S. support continued throughout the 1980s until congressional pressure forced the suspension and eventual complete withdrawal of aid because of massive human rights violations by the Barre regime in 1988.

Civil war intensified in the northwest region in the late 1980s. Although the Barre regime won most of the fighting, it also carried out reprisals against civilians, massacring some 50,000 people, largely of the main northwestern Isaq clan, and forcing another 500,000 into exile. International condemnation followed the attacks, including U.S. congressional pressure to suspend economic and military aid to the Barre regime. Full civil war erupted shortly after, as opposition to the government spread southward, and Barre was ousted in January 1991 by the forces of the United Somali Congress (USC), which later split into factions led by General Mohamed Farah Aideed and Ali Mahdi Mohammed. Four months after the ouster of Barre, the dominant group in the five northwest provinces, the Somali National Movement (SNM), announced the independence of the separate "Republic of Somaliland." Barre died in exile in Nigeria.

Following the collapse of the central government, Somalia descended into fighting among at least sixteen rival warlords and their factions for control of Mogadishu and other areas of the country. Famine and lawlessness ensued, and an estimated 300,000 Somalis died of starvation during the year of civil war that followed Barre's ouster.<sup>1</sup> After lengthy delays due to security concerns, the U.N. Security Council launched Operation Provide Relief, the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM I), in mid-August 1992 to provide humanitarian relief. The deteriorating security situation eventually left the U.N. mission unable to deliver food and supplies to those in need and led to a U.N. appeal for military support for the humanitarian operation. President George Bush subsequently ordered 25,000 U.S. troops into Somalia on December 9, 1992, as the U.S. United Task Force (UNITAF), or Operation Restore Hope.<sup>2</sup>

When President Bill Clinton took office in January 1993, he was eager to reduce American involvement and turn the mission over to U.N. forces. A U.N.-organized conference resulted in a March 1993 resolution among the major faction leaders to end the violence, and the U.N. then expanded UNOSOM into UNOSOM II, scheduled to take over UNITAF and have greater enforcement power for a mandate of disarmament and "nation-building."<sup>3</sup> The U.S. officially handed over command of the operation to the U.N. on May 4, 1993, and by June, only 1,200 U.S. combat soldiers and 3,000 support troops remained as part of U.N. forces comprised of contingents from 28 nations.

Following the take over of operational responsibility from UNITAF to UNOSOM II, the security situation once again rapidly deteriorated, particularly in Mogadishu, where a seventeen-hour battle on October 3, 1993, culminated in the deaths of 18 U.S. soldiers.<sup>4</sup> Almost immediately after the attack, President Clinton ordered the withdrawal of U.S. troops, who left on March 25, 1994.<sup>5</sup> The remaining U.N. forces left Somalia the following spring.

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<sup>1</sup> See CRS Issue Brief IB92112, *Somalia: War and Famine*. By Theodoros S. Dagne. Updated November 6, 1992 (Archived).

<sup>2</sup> For information on the U.S. and U.N. operations in Somalia, see *Learning from Somalia: The Lessons of Armed Intervention*. Edited by Walter Clarke and Jeffrey Herbst. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997. Also see CRS Report for Congress 92-916, *Somalia Intervention: Broader Implications for U.S. Policy*. By Mark Lowenthal. December 8, 1992.

<sup>3</sup> See CRS Issue Brief IB92131, *Somalia: Operation Restore Hope and UNOSOM II*. By Raymond W. Copson. Updated March 21, 1994 (Archived).

<sup>4</sup> For an in-depth description and analysis of the attack, see the PBS Frontline program "Ambush in Mogadishu," at [<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ambush/>]. See also Mark Bowden's series, "Blackhawk Down: An American War Story," in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, daily from November 16, 1997 - December 14, 1997.

<sup>5</sup> For more on the decision to withdraw, see CRS Report for Congress 94-817, *Somalia: Current Developments, Drawdowns, and Implications*. By Alfred B. Prados. October 21, 1994.

## Recent Political Conditions

Since the U.S. and the U.N. ended their involvement in peacekeeping in Somalia, some observers have claimed that the world has given up on the country, although various diplomatic efforts are currently underway to end the violence and establish a central governing authority. Outside entities have attempted to mediate, including the governments of Ethiopia and Egypt, the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Conference, the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Some fourteen cease-fires and resolutions for a national reconciliation in Somalia have been signed and broken since the fall of the central government in 1991, but certain regions have successfully established regional authority structures, and the last two agreements, brokered respectively by the Egyptian government and Ethiopia under the IGAD, have given rise to guarded optimism for the future in Somalia.

After the last U.N. forces left Somalia in March 1995, with support from a small contingent of U.S. Marines, violence continued, centered in Mogadishu. Militiamen loyal to rival warlords fought regularly for control of territory and resources, yet most battles did little to shift the regional balances of power. Aideed, leader of a United Somali Congress (USC) faction comprised of members of the Habr Gadr sub-clan of the Hawiye family, maintained control of south Mogadishu and declared himself president of Somalia, while Ali Mahdi Mohammed, leader of another USC faction with members from the Abgal sub-clan of the Hawiye family, held power in north Mogadishu. Ali Mahdi was allied with another Mogadishu faction leader, Osman Hassan Ali Atto, in fighting to prevent Aideed from gaining control of more of Mogadishu, where a "Green Line" differentiated areas of the city held by different warlords. Meanwhile, the rest of the country also suffered from violence among warring factions, with rival warlords struggling for control in the northwest "Republic of Somaliland"; the south-central, with significant fighting in Baidoa; the southwest, where violence centered around the port city of Kismayo; and the northeast, where fighting revolved around the chairmanship of the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF).<sup>6</sup>

On August 1, 1996, General Mohammed Farah Aideed died of injuries sustained in a gun battle a week earlier with forces loyal to rival warlord Ali Atto. Ali Mahdi and Ali Atto immediately called for a cease-fire, and some observers expressed new optimism for peace in light of the death of Aideed, who had repeatedly refused to engage in peace negotiations. Less than a week after Aideed's death, however, the leadership of his Hawiye clan alliance announced that his son, Hussein Mohammed Aideed, would be responsible for "carrying on the battle" as the new leader of the faction, and he pledged to carry on his father's policies.<sup>7</sup> Hussein Aideed, in his mid-thirties, is a naturalized American citizen who landed with the U.S. troops in December 1992, for two weeks of active duty as a translator and corporal in the

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<sup>6</sup> For more information on the clan rivalries and strongholds in post-independence Somalia, see CRS Report for Congress 94-817.

<sup>7</sup> Buckley, Stephen. "Son of Aideed Chosen to Head Somali Faction." *Washington Post*. August 5, 1996.

Marine reserves. He was elected president for a two-year period by the 80-member cabinet and leadership council of the United Somali Congress-Somali National Alliance (USC-SNA).

After the election of Hussein Aideed, heavy fighting resumed in Mogadishu, and the U.N. Security Council issued a resolution on August 13, 1996, calling for a conference between the factions. Aideed rejected the proposition as outside interference, while other leaders welcomed the recommendation. Violence subsided somewhat in the ensuing months, and President Daniel arap Moi of Kenya mediated peace talks in October, resulting in a resolution to end hostilities, remove roadblocks, and allow the free movement of people. None of these conditions was met. The government of Ethiopia attempted its own mediation, convening most factions to attend talks at Sodere, a resort town outside the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa. Both efforts stalled, and severe violence broke out once again in December as Aideed's forces battled those of Ali Mahdi, Ali Atto, and Musa Sudi Yalahow, a relative of Ali Mahdi who controlled the southern Mogadishu suburb of Medina.

Fighting persisted throughout 1997, particularly in Mogadishu; the region outside Baidoa in south-central Somalia; and the area around Kismayo, in southeastern Somalia; the violence still had minimal effect on the balance of power between the various factions. Prominent Somalis launched several serious efforts to advance the reconciliation process, such as the formation of the National Salvation Council in January as part of the Sodere peace initiative by the leaders of over two dozen groups, including Ali Mahdi, although Aideed was excluded from this attempt to establish a national government. Various third-party intermediaries, such as the Arab League, the IGAD, the OAU, and the UN, sought to assist in mediation efforts but met with little success.

## **Egyptian and Ethiopian Peace Initiatives**

Many organizations and governments have attempted to mediate among the warlords, but with little long-term success. Two initiatives, however, have recently seemed more promising; one, led by the government of Ethiopia, convened in the resort town of Sodere in November 1996; the other, initiated by the Egyptian government, sponsored meetings in Cairo in December 1997. Although the Sodere initiative in particular appeared initially to have a good chance of success, negotiations in that process have since stalled. The Ethiopian government accused Egypt of undermining its efforts at reconciliation by convening the Cairo talks in December 1997, and Ethiopian ministers have repeatedly maintained that the Cairo Declaration was detrimental to peace in Somalia.<sup>8</sup>

The Sodere initiative, sponsored by Ethiopia with the support of both the IGAD and the OAU, convened on November 29, 1996 and aimed at forming a new central government. After three months of talks, twenty-six factions and their leaders ultimately created the National Salvation Council, agreeing to hold a national

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<sup>8</sup> "Ethiopia Says Somali Cairo Agreement A Threat to Peace." *Panafrican News Agency*. December 24, 1997.

reconciliation conference for all Somali factions in Bosasso early in 1998. The elected “president” of the “Republic of Somaliland,” Mohammed Egal, refused to attend the meeting but did leave open the possibility of participating in a loose federation with the government formed by the National Salvation Council. Aideed and his faction boycotted the talks, calling themselves the only legitimate government and refusing to negotiate until the other warlords acknowledged Aideed as president. Aideed has accused the Ethiopian government of supporting Ali Mahdi in the clan struggles for Mogadishu.

Under the Ethiopian-sponsored talks, the national reconciliation conference in Bosasso, a stable port city in the northeast held by the Darod clan, was designed to balance power among the five clans and emphasize the inclusion and input of all factions, not only the Hawiye sub-clans fighting for control of Mogadishu. In spite of continued statements of support and commitment by the warlords and the IGAD governments, the national reconciliation conference was postponed several times during 1998. Ali Mahdi stated at one point that the delay was to allow Aideed to join the process; he had begun making conciliatory overtures toward the Ethiopian government and the other Mogadishu warlords. At the end of the IGAD summit in March 1998, the member governments issued a statement noting that “the proliferation of parallel initiatives can only undermine the central objective of accelerating the peace process in Somalia” and urging “all concerned parties to bolster the IGAD peace process on Somalia and ensure that all assistance provided to Somalia be geared to enhance the peace process and that it be channeled through the IGAD mechanism.”

The “parallel initiatives” mentioned in the IGAD statement referred specifically to meetings in Cairo sponsored jointly by the government of Egypt and the Arab League in December 1997. The IGAD governments, particularly Ethiopia, accused Egypt of deliberately undermining the Sodere initiative in order to strengthen Egyptian power in the region and weaken the Ethiopian position.<sup>9</sup> Tensions between the Ethiopian and Egyptian governments have been ongoing for decades, largely because of a power struggle over control of the headwaters of the Nile River. The Nile is the lifeline of Egypt and since the main source of the Nile is Ethiopia, Egypt has for many years maintained a strong presence in the region. Egypt assumes that a successful mediation effort by Ethiopia will place the Horn of Africa country in a stronger position in a country Egypt long considered its sphere of influence. Therefore mediation in Somalia has come to symbolize increased influence in regional matters. Egypt denied the charges, asserting that its talks were more inclusive because of the participation of Hussein Aideed.

After more than a month of talks, and just five days after faction leaders agreed on how many delegates each group would send to a 465-member reconciliation conference scheduled for February 1998 in Baidoa, all but two of the major factions signed the “Somali Declaration of Principles,” providing for a 13-person presidential council, a prime minister, and a national assembly. The declaration stated that the warring factions agreed “unanimously on a cease-fire and the disengagement of opposing forces” for “lasting peace, stability and an end to the conflict and civil war

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.



in Somalia,” and the leaders vowed to take immediate steps to rebuild confidence in Somalia, including reopening the seaport and airport in Mogadishu.<sup>10</sup>

Under the Egyptian-sponsored agreement, Aideed and Ali Mahdi would each get 80 seats at the meeting, with the remainder divided among the other four clans. The conference was also slated to occur in Baidoa, a traditionally Hawiye stronghold inland from Mogadishu. The agreement clearly favored the Hawiye clan of Aideed and Ali Mahdi, both in the number of seats and the location, making Mogadishu disproportionately important to successful peace talks. Mohammed Haji Ibrahim Egal, the “President” of the “Republic of Somaliland,” boycotted the talks, asserting the independence of the northwestern region and his refusal to allow its reintegration; Colonel Abdallah Youssef and General Aden Abdallah Nur, faction leaders in the northeast, also refused to sign in opposition to the accord. Critics of the agreement asserted that Aideed participated only because he was allowed to dictate many of the terms, such as an extremely high number of seats for his relatively small clan, and the location of Baidoa, since he refused to set foot in Bosasso. The conference, originally scheduled for February 1998, was postponed several times over the course of the past year because of fighting between Aideed’s militias and other factions, and is now scheduled to take place in early 1999.

Meanwhile, a 20-member delegation established by an international conference held in October 1998 in Addis Ababa traveled to different regions of Somalia at the beginning of December in a new effort at reconciliation. The group, with representatives from Ethiopia, Egypt, Eritrea, Italy, Norway, Uganda, and Yemen, first visited Somaliland to evaluate the involvement of local communities, such as religious and women’s groups and village elders, in the peace process. After arriving in Mogadishu, the group was expelled on December 5 by Hussein Aideed and Ali Mahdi, who accused the delegates of trying to divide the Somali people. One representative reported that “more and more ordinary Somalis were saying they wanted peace...there was a feeling that the rival warlords are losing influence and that in a number of areas, locally-based authorities had exerted control and kept some stability.”<sup>11</sup>

## **The Emergence of Local Administration**

The inability and unwillingness of Somali faction leaders to end their power struggle and cooperate for lasting peace remain the greatest obstacles to the establishment of a working government in Somalia. Observers note that a key step in restoring stability is to convince rival factions that they are in a “mutually hurting stalemate,” a situation in which each faction can successfully stand up to the other and defend its own territory, but no one can extend control or make gains. Certainly no arrangement can be successful without the transparent and good-faith cooperation of each warlord in each region; as former U.S. Ambassador to Somalia Robert

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<sup>10</sup> “Somali Factions Sign Power-Sharing Pact: Move May End 7 Years of War.” *Miami Herald*. December 23, 1997.

<sup>11</sup> “Diplomats Expelled from Somalia.” *BBC News*. December 5, 1998.

Oakley stated early last year, "It is up to the Somalis themselves to decide whether they want a unitary state or whether they want to continue with individual clans controlling chunks of territory."<sup>12</sup>

Although the intractability of the faction leaders themselves constitutes the most obvious barrier to a negotiated settlement, many observers now argue that perhaps the peace process itself is flawed in that it seeks the wrong outcome. They maintain that the peace process must recognize that a centralized government is currently unrealistic, and efforts should instead capitalize on the strengths of Somali culture, such as a spirit of local autonomy, historic arrangements for power-sharing and decentralization, and a strong desire for peace. Somali analysts suggest that a negotiated agreement in Somalia has the greatest hope of success if built from the ground up; diplomatic efforts should first focus on establishing local arrangements for administration and security, then move to regional structures, and finally, a central government which could perhaps be a simple, loose federation of polities. This emergence of local administration should be fostered and encouraged with the long-term goal of a central government in mind. Somalia may well represent a failed nation-state in the traditional sense of the term, but these observers assert that government structures are indeed functioning in some areas.<sup>13</sup>

The northwest region of Somalia is considered by many such analysts to be a model for successful regional authority and administration. The "Republic of Somaliland" seceded from the rest of Somalia in 1991 and now has its own flag and national anthem, army and police, and currency. Its government collects revenues from taxes levied at ports and roadblocks and vehicle licenses. The region has established a constitution and parliament and conducted democratic elections. Despite its government structures and apparatus, the "Republic of Somaliland" remains unrecognized by the international community. The "President," Mohammed Haji Ibrahim Egal, and his government administer only three of the five provinces that comprise the self-proclaimed state; the eastern area of Sanaag is home to a different powerful clan, which, while not hostile, refuses central administrative authority.

The port city of Bosasso in northeastern Somalia has also been termed a success story for clan and local rule.<sup>14</sup> This Red Sea port grew from fewer than 10,000 residents to more than 80,000 over the past seven years, largely because of a stable government and growing economy. In Bosasso, the local military and political leaders have established a regional government controlled by clan elders and held by General Mohammed Abshir Musa, leader of the Somalia Salvation Democratic Front, the political wing of the Darod clan's Majertayn sub-clan. The 13-member council of Majertayn elders appoints members of parliament to administer each of three

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<sup>12</sup> Constantine, Gus. "Egypt, Ethiopia Nudge Somalia to Unity Rule: Former Ambassador Believes Decision Should Be Up to Somalis." *Washington Times*. January 22, 1998.

<sup>13</sup> Adam, Hussein, and Richard Ford, with Ali Jimale Ahmed, Abdinasir Osman Isse, Nur Weheliye, and David Smock. "Removing Barricades: Options for Peace and Rehabilitation in Somalia." United States Institute of Peace, 1998.

<sup>14</sup> McKinley, James C. Jr. "In One Somali Town, Clan Rule Has Brought Peace." *New York Times*. June 22, 1997.

provinces in the northeast region, drawing the appointees from the leadership of various sub-clans and minorities. Unresolved disputes in the parliaments are settled by the council of elders. The clan-based government has been able to provide an environment with very little violence, supply basic utilities and running water, fund a police force, and foster thriving trade in its port.

In July, after a two-month conference of several hundred delegates, leaders in the northeastern region known as Puntland announced that they planned to create an autonomous region, with Colonel Abdullah Youssef as president. Two other major faction leaders in the region, including General Mohammed Abshir Musa, opposed the decision, however, posing a serious threat to its successful implementation. Mohammed Siad Hersi Morgan, chief of the Somali National Front, a Darod faction of the Marehan sub-clan in southwest Somalia, declared in September that he planned to set up a "Jubaland" state, with the southern port of Kismayo as its capital, as part of a new Somali approach to find a "bottom up" solution to the situation in Somalia.

Members of the international community have also come to recognize the presence and benefits of local, decentralized authority. The head of the Nairobi-based U.N. Political Office for Somalia announced in June that it would begin supporting regional leaders to form administrative structures and build institutions of civil society, and would look to a new, bottom-up approach to peace in Somalia in order to form the building blocks for a successful federation. Kenyan President Moi also pushed for local administration in talks with Aideed, Ali Mahdi, and Ali Atto in April 1998. The three major clan leaders in Mogadishu agreed to establish a joint administration structure for the capital city. They attempted to take a first step in that direction with the reopening of the Mogadishu seaport in September, but the ceremony was marred by militiamen for two other faction leaders who opened fire on the gathering. Libya has donated \$800,000 to help pay for the administration of Mogadishu, including its police force, which graduated from professional training in late December 1998.<sup>15</sup> Colonel Moammar Gaddafi of Libya has become increasingly involved in the reconciliation process in Somalia; in addition to contributing funding for several mediation efforts, he hosted a meeting in Tripoli of a delegation from the Mogadishu administration in December 1998.<sup>16</sup> His apparent interest in seeing reconciliation in Somalia coincides with his new interest in African affairs.

Religious leaders have also become a stabilizing force in Somalia. Observers report many signs that Islamic religious leaders have succeeded in stepping into the power vacuum created by a lack of central government.<sup>17</sup> These include the proliferation of Muslim charities, the growing influence of Islamic religious leaders, and particularly the prevalence and power in northern Mogadishu and northern Somalia of Sharia courts, which use a legal system based on the Koran. These Sharia courts have issued severe punishments, which have served as an effective, though

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<sup>15</sup> "New Somali Police Force in Mogadishu." *Reuters*. December 29, 1998.

<sup>16</sup> "Somali Faction Leaders Leave for Libya." *Xinhua News Agency*. December 17, 1998.

<sup>17</sup> McKinley, James C. Jr. "Islamic Movement's Niche: Bringing Order to Somalia's Clans." *New York Times*. August 23, 1996.

harsh, deterrent to crime in various parts of Somalia. Islamic charities have built health clinics and opened Koranic schools, contributing to reconstruction and new economic growth.

Although some observers assert that the fiercely independent nature of the Somalis, as well as their strong allegiance to clan elders and leaders, preclude the evolution of Somalia into a fundamentalist Islamic state, others point to the growing number of fundamentalist groups as a danger sign. Particularly noteworthy are accounts that Al-Itahad, an Islamic fundamentalist group with support from Sudan, and operating within Somalia, is engaged in cross-border raids on Ethiopia in an attempt to destabilize the region.<sup>18</sup> Over the past year, Ethiopian forces have reportedly crossed the border with Somalia on several occasions in pursuit of Al-Itahad forces.

## Economic and Humanitarian Conditions

Relative peace in much of the country in 1997 and 1998 led to a rise in commercial activity and contributed to some economic recovery. Livestock and fruit exports continued to revive, although exports are still hurt by the closure of the Mogadishu seaport. Other positive indications include regular airline flights carrying freight and passengers; generally available consumer goods and food; financial transfers and banking activity; and, operating telephone and communications systems, as well as computers, although the provision of such services remains highly uneven.<sup>19</sup> Somalia remains a chronic food deficit country, however, and some of the most fertile agricultural regions have recently suffered from a drought, serious flooding, or both. In November 1997, over 2,000 people were killed and as many as 250,000 left homeless in the south after torrential rains caused major flooding and devastated crops.<sup>20</sup>

The World Food Program estimated on December 9, 1998, that 700,000 Somalis face imminent food shortages, and also announced that Somalis have the lowest average daily intake of food, less than half that of people in developed countries. The country ranks 175<sup>th</sup> out of 175 nations in human development, and life expectancy is only 43 years, with one in four children expected to die before reaching age 5. United Nations agencies had previously announced at the end of November that a third consecutive crop failure in southern and central Somalia has left 300,000 people “in an extremely precarious condition,” and launched a donor appeal for \$8 million

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<sup>18</sup> "Army Acts Against Fundamentalist Group." *Foreign Broadcast Information Service* Transcribed Text. August 11, 1996.

<sup>19</sup> Adam, Hussein, and Richard Ford, with Ali Jimale Ahmed, Abdinasir Osman Isse, Nur Weheliye, and David Smock. "Removing Barricades: Options for Peace and Rehabilitation in Somalia." United States Institute of Peace Report (Draft). March 1998.

<sup>20</sup> "Refugee Repatriation Threatens Stability in Somaliland." *Refugees International*, November 12, 1998.

to provide emergency assistance in food, nutrition, and health.<sup>21</sup> The European Union has pledged \$10 million for sorghum, corn, and split peas. Many aid workers fear that Somalia has become dependent on aid and is now unable to feed itself. Remaining land mines constitute another major impediment to agriculture and livestock, particularly in the northwest and along the border with Ethiopia.<sup>22</sup>

Recent reports indicate that conditions in Somalia closely parallel those which precipitated Operation Restore Hope in 1992. One U.N. worker recently explained that, "The problem in '92 was you had drought, bad harvests and no pay for the militias, which raided the crops. The militia was eating. No one else was. You've got the same problem now, on a smaller scale."<sup>23</sup> Combined with the recent crop failures in once-fertile southern Somalia is the increased violence throughout the country. Major clashes have been reported in Mogadishu, where the new municipal authority recently established a night curfew; in the south-central port of Merca; in Baidoa, where over a dozen people were killed in a rocket attack on January 3, 1999; in Kismayo, where over 30 people were reported killed in early January 1999; and in southwestern Somalia. The Red Cross no longer operates in Somalia because of security concerns following the kidnapping of eight employees and two pilots in April 1998. Other agencies are having increasing difficulty distributing the much-needed food and supplies provided by the United Nations and cannot ship food in large convoys because of the threat of ambush.<sup>24</sup>

Although the "Republic of Somaliland" has enjoyed relative stability for the past several years, and has been able to establish some functioning government institutions, humanitarian conditions there remain dire. Receiving assistance is complicated by the fact that the government is not recognized by the international community and refusal to treat the region separately in terms of disbursement. Refugees International also warned recently that the northwestern transition to democracy could disintegrate without greater aid to offset the impact of a large number of refugees, equivalent to some ten percent of the population, set to be repatriated soon from Ethiopia by the U.N to Somaliland.<sup>25</sup> At the end of 1997, more than 465,000 Somalis were refugees, with an estimated 240,000 in Ethiopia, 150,000 in Kenya, 53,000 in Yemen, 20,000 in Djibouti, and 3,000 in Eritrea. A further 200,000 Somalis were internally displaced.<sup>26</sup> In 1999, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees hopes to repatriate 80,000 refugees from Ethiopia into northern Somalia; 10,000 from Kenya to southern Somalia; 5,000 from Yemen; and 1,000 from Djibouti. The agency is requesting close to \$25 million to fund the repatriation

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<sup>21</sup> "Crop Failure in Somalia Triggers Famine." *All Africa News Agency*, November 30, 1998.

<sup>22</sup> For more details, see "Hidden Killers: The Global Landmine Crisis." United States Department of State report. September 1998.

<sup>23</sup> Vick, Karl. "An Anarchic Somalia Lurches Toward Another Famine." *Washington Post*. December 27, 1998.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Refugees International*. "Refugee Repatriation Threatens Stability in Somaliland." November 10, 1998.

<sup>26</sup> U.S. Committee for Refugees. "Country Report: Somalia."

efforts, which will include special programs for resettlement and reintegration into safe areas.<sup>27</sup> The refugee problem has recently intensified because of the renewed threat of famine, and 10,000 Somalis crossed into Ethiopia in late 1998 to escape the drought and food shortage.<sup>28</sup>

The U.S. remains a major donor of humanitarian aid and sponsor of development projects in Somalia through non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The U.S. is the second-largest donor after the European Union, with all donor assistance totaling \$73 million in 1997. In post-UNOSOM Somalia, a donor coalition called the Somalia Aid Coordination Body (SACB), comprised of over 150 organizations, functions to address specific issues such as health and food security. Most U.S. assistance is channeled through USAID and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in programs to help minimize future food crises and to help keep the country stable. The program in Somalia complements the Greater Horn of Africa Initiative (GHAI), “whose food security and conflict prevention strategies support sustainable economic growth and prevent or mitigate conflict.”<sup>29</sup>

## Issues for the United States

After Somalia ended its relationship with the Soviet Union in 1977 and turned to the United States for support, Somalia became an important and strategic American ally in the Cold War. Even after congressional pressure led to the suspension of aid to the Barre regime in 1988, the United States government was eager to restore stability in Somalia and resume close ties, mainly because of an interest in regional security.

According to one observer mention of Somalia in U.S. diplomatic circles now “provokes embarrassment and avoidance behavior.”<sup>30</sup> The policy failures of Operation Restore Hope and UNOSOM II contributed to increased reluctance to get militarily engaged in Africa. The “mission creep” and lack of clarity in the mandate for UNOSOM II contributed to the deadliest firefight involving U.S. troops since Vietnam. Analysts argue that this made the Clinton Administration and Congress reluctant to involve U.S. forces in other peace-building missions, particularly in Rwanda, where genocide broke out, just six months after the Mogadishu firefight. With respect to Somalia itself, no long-term political strategy for reconstruction has been formulated or publicly articulated. However, the U.S. continues to finance humanitarian assistance through USAID programs, and its Greater Horn of Africa Initiative (GHAI) to prevent famine and promote development in the region.

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<sup>27</sup> UNHCR Global Appeal - Somalia. See [<http://www.unhcr.ch/fdrs/ga99/som.htm>].

<sup>28</sup> “Somalis Flee Drought to Ethiopia.” *Associated Press*. December 29, 1998.

<sup>29</sup> For details on U.S. assistance to Somalia, see the USAID Congressional Presentations on Somalia and the Greater Horn of Africa Initiative at [<http://www.info.usaid.gov/pubs/cp99/afr>].

<sup>30</sup> United States Institute of Peace Report (Draft).

Many observers see Somalia as remote from U.S. security interests and argue that there is little reason for involvement there. Moreover, some maintain, with other mediators involved the U.S. “need not assume the role of peacemaker or peacekeeper. Too many states have been playing this role...”<sup>31</sup> However, some Somalis argue that American encouragement of the peace and reconciliation processes now underway could make an important contribution, particularly in light of perceived U.S. credibility in Somalia. Hussein Aideed claims that, “We blame the U.N. for what went wrong, not the U.S.,” and many Somali citizens lament the current lack of U.S. interest and involvement.<sup>32</sup> By re-engaging in Somalia through longer-term commitments to reconciliation and reconstruction efforts, some analysts note that the United States can protect its regional interests in the Horn of Africa and also address broader concerns regarding the rise of Islamic fundamentalism.

## Congress and Somalia

At the height of the Somali humanitarian crisis and civil war in the early 1990s, the U.S. Congress was actively engaged in efforts to get the international community to intervene to halt deteriorating social and economic conditions and end the civil war. Since the withdrawal of U.S. and U.N. forces, however, Congress has shown diminished interest in events or prospects for peace in Somalia. The one notable exception is House Concurrent Resolution 339 first introduced on October 8, 1998, by Congressmen Tom Campbell (R-CA) and Donald Payne (D-NJ). The resolution, which has been reintroduced in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress in early February 1999, notes the “significant level of economic and social stability” achieved in the “Republic of Somaliland,” and urges both President Clinton and the international community not to “delay, diminish, or cancel the amounts and kinds of assistance” to Somalia. It further states that aid to northwestern Somalia “does not constitute recognition of any particular claim to sovereignty by any de facto government of the region,” and calls on the President to increase involvement in the reconciliation and reconstruction processes underway in Somalia. The resolution was referred to the House Committee on International Relations and no further action was taken.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Reiss, Bob. “I Am a Product of the U.S.” *Washington Post Magazine*. August 31, 1997.

Figure 1. Map of Somalia



Source: Adapted by CRS. Cartographic Section, United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Map No. 3690 Rev. 7, January 2007.