

CRS Report for Congress

Somalia: Current Conditions and Prospects for a Lasting Peace

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Summary

In October 2002, the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) launched a peace process designed to end factional fighting in Somalia, led by the government of Kenya under the leadership of Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat. In September 2003, the parties agreed on a Transitional National Charter, which paved the way for a Transitional Federal Government (TFG). In August 2004, a 275-member Transitional Parliament was inaugurated in Kenya. In October 2004, The Transitional Parliament elected Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed as the new president of Somalia. In November, President Yusuf appointed Ali Mohamed Gedi as prime minister. But the TFG was not able to move to Mogadishu because of instability and opposition by the warlords and some members of the TFG.

In early 2006, factional violence in Mogadishu erupted, killing hundreds of civilians and displacing many more people. The surge in violence was between militia loyal to the Islamic Courts and a self-proclaimed anti-terrorism coalition backed by powerful local warlords. The fighting received unusual attention in Somalia and in the region due, in large part, to reports that the warlords were backed by the United States government. The forces of the Islamic Courts Union strengthened and expanded areas under their control after the defeat of the warlords in Mogadishu. Mogadishu became relatively peaceful, and the Islamic Courts received support from the population in areas it controlled. Negotiations efforts did not lead to a major breakthrough, although the parties reached some agreements.

On December 24, 2006, Ethiopian and TFG forces launched a military campaign against the forces of the Islamic Courts Union. Ethiopia deployed its forces inside Somalia shortly after the Courts took over Mogadishu in June 2006. On December 28, Ethiopian troops captured Mogadishu with little resistance from the ICU. The ICU leadership decided a day before the Mogadishu attack to leave the city in order to avoid bloodshed and the destruction of Mogadishu, according to a senior official of the ICU. On January 1, 2007, the ICU lost its last stronghold, Kismaayo, after its forces withdrew to an area near the Kenyan border, although most of its fighters and leaders either melted into society throughout Somalia or fled to neighboring countries.

The Ethiopian military intervention, while it has accomplished its military objectives of ousting the Courts from Mogadishu and other areas the Courts controlled, has been criticized by governments and regional organizations. Ethiopian officials argued that their military action is justified because the Islamic Courts posed a serious threat to Ethiopia and regional stability, and because it is an extremist, Jihadist group. Ethiopian and U.S. officials have also accused the Courts of being influenced or tied to well known terrorist individuals and Al Qaeda. Islamic Courts officials have repeatedly rejected these allegations and on a number of occasions have offered to work with U.S. officials.

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Somalia: Current Conditions and Prospects for a Lasting Peace

Most Recent Developments

On December 24, 2006, Ethiopian and Transitional Federal Government (TFG) forces launched a military campaign against the forces of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), a group that took over power in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, in June 2006. On December 28, Ethiopian troops captured Mogadishu with little resistance from the ICU. The ICU leadership decided a day before the Mogadishu attack to leave the city in order to avoid bloodshed and the destruction of Mogadishu, according to a senior official of the ICU.¹ On January 1, 2007, the ICU lost its last stronghold, Kismaayo, after its forces withdrew to an area near the Kenyan border, although most of its fighters and leaders either simply melted into society throughout Somalia or fled to neighboring countries. Some of the top leaders of the ICU are currently in Yemen, Djibouti, Kenya, and Somalia.² In late January, the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Somali Council of Islamic Courts (SCIC), formerly known as ICU, Sharif Sheik Ahmed, traveled to Kenya. On January 24, 2007, the U.S. Ambassador to Kenya, Ambassador Michael Ranneberger, reportedly met with Sheik Ahmed. Other leaders of the Courts have also been approached by U.S. officials as part of a new strategy to reach out to Court officials and others to participate in proposed negotiations among Somali groups and the TFG.

Somalia: Facts & Statistics

Population:	8.8 million (2006 est.)
Growth rate:	2.85% (2006 est.)
Life expectancy:	48 years
Approximate size:	slightly smaller than Texas
Capital:	Mogadishu
Infant Mortality Rate:	114.89 deaths/1,000 live births (2006 est.)
HIV/AIDS, adult prevalence rate:	1% (2001 est.)
GDP, per capita:	\$600 (2005 est.)
GDP, real growth rate:	2.4% (2005 est.)
Ethnic groups:	Somali, 85%; Bantu & other non-Somali, 15% (including Arabs, 30,000)
Religion:	Sunni Muslim
Official language:	Somali

Source: U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, *World Factbook*, 2006.

¹ Author interview with senior ICU official in late December 2006

² Author interview with senior ICU official and regional sources in the Horn of Africa.

The Ethiopian military intervention, while it has accomplished its military objective of ousting the Courts from Mogadishu and other areas the Courts controlled, has been criticized by governments and regional organizations. The African Union, the European Commission, the Arab League, and others have called for the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops and for the deployment of a peacekeeping force. Ethiopian officials argued that their military action is justified because the Islamic Courts posed a serious threat to Ethiopia and regional stability, and because the Islamic Courts is an extremist, Jihadist group. Ethiopian and U.S. officials have also accused the Courts of being influenced or tied to well known terrorist individuals and Al Qaeda. Islamic Courts officials have repeatedly rejected these allegations and on a number of occasions have offered to work with U.S. officials, according to one senior Courts official. Allegations about the presence of the three suspects involved in the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya in 1998 have been made on many occasions over the years. However, the Islamic Courts did not exist as an organized group when these allegations were made. Those in charge of Mogadishu and other areas in southern Somalia were the warlords who were and in some cases still are ministers in the current Transitional Federal Government.

On January 8, 2007, the United States Air Force, using AC-130 gun ships, attacked several locations in southern Somalia, reportedly to kill the three terror suspects in the U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998. Reportedly, the United States launched another attack the following day, although U.S. officials deny any further attacks by its forces. The British humanitarian group, Oxfam, stated in a press release that an estimated 70 people were killed in the bombings and vital water resources were destroyed in Afmadow district. A number of governments criticized the U.S. attacks, including officials in Europe and the Government of Djibouti, where U.S. forces are currently stationed. Djiboutian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Ali Yusuf told the BBC that the raid was counterproductive to achieving peace. He also stated that his government had not been informed about the air strikes. According to a *New York Times* article, the United States actively coordinated with Ethiopian forces in targeting suspected terrorists and Islamic Union forces.³ U.S. Special Operations troops from Task Force 88 were reportedly deployed to Ethiopia and entered Somalia. Moreover, the United States reportedly shared intelligence with Ethiopian military and used an airstrip in Eastern Ethiopia to launch attacks inside Somalia. A senior Ethiopian government official denied that there was any coordination with U.S. forces.

Meanwhile, conditions in Mogadishu and Kismaayo remain fragile. Ethiopian troops have come under attack, and a number of Ethiopian soldiers have been killed by snipers or in ambushes. TFG and Ethiopian security forces are not facing an organized insurgency, although militia groups and forces loyal to the Courts may reemerge once Ethiopian troops pull out from Somalia. Some Somalis and human rights advocates are concerned over what some people refer to as a witch hunt by TFG and Ethiopian security forces. Ethiopian and TFG security forces reportedly have been going house to house arresting Oromos (an Ethiopian ethnic group),

³ Michael Gordon and Mark Mazzetti. "U.S. Used Base in Ethiopia to Hunt Al Qaeda," *New York Times*. February 23, 2007.

supporters of the Islamic Courts, and members of the TFG considered not supportive of the new Somali government and the Ethiopian intervention. The government of Kenya has deported dozens of Somalis and other nationals to TFG officials and Ethiopian security forces, according to Kenyan sources. In one particular case, Kenyan officials blindfolded and handcuffed 30 individuals and returned them to Mogadishu, where these detainees were taken by Ethiopian and TFG security personnel to unknown locations, according to Somali sources and government officials in the region.

On January 17, 2007, the Transitional Federal Parliament ousted the Speaker of Parliament, Sharif Hassan Sheik Adan, from his position. The former Speaker, who has been a vocal critic of the Ethiopian intervention and the U.S. air strike, has a strong following in Mogadishu and has been active in reaching out and engaging the Islamic Courts officials when they had control over Mogadishu. U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Jendayi Fraser, stated in mid-January that “the no-confidence motion brought against the Parliament Speaker is likely to have a negative impact on this process of dialogue.” In late January, the TFG elected Sheikh Adan Mohamed Nur Madobe, a former warlord and an ally of President Abdullahi Yusuf, as Speaker of Parliament.

Negotiations among Somali groups and the TFG are expected to take place at the end of March. Somali observers and some government officials in the region are concerned that the reconciliation process, unless inclusive, is likely to fail. Moreover, if the objective of the reconciliation process is simply to have dialogue without a clear intent to share power, including with members of the Islamic Courts, Somalia may continue to face political instability and uncertainty. The proposed reconciliation process is being organized and managed by the TFG, raising the possibility that a number of groups would likely be excluded by the TFG.

Peacekeeping Mission

On December 6, 2006, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1725, “reiterating its commitment to a comprehensive and lasting settlement of the situation in Somalia through the Transitional Federal Charter, and stressing the importance of broad-based and representative institutions and of an inclusive political process, as envisaged in the Transitional Federal Charter.” U. N. Security Council Resolution 1725 further called for “all Member States, in particular those in the region, to refrain from any action in contravention of the arms embargo and related measures, and should take all actions necessary to prevent such contravention.” Moreover, the Security Council expressed its “willingness to engage with all parties in Somalia who are committed to achieving a political settlement through peaceful and inclusive dialogue, including the Union of Islamic Courts.” The Security Council, acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, authorized the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) and the African Union to establish “a protection and training mission in Somalia.” U. N. Security Council Resolution 1725 specifically states that countries bordering Somalia “would not deploy troops to Somalia.”

At the African Union Summit in late January 2007, several African countries pledged to contribute troops for a peacekeeping mission in Somalia. As of late January 2007, Ghana, Nigeria, Burundi, Uganda, and Malawi have pledged troops. Ethiopian troops began to pull out of Somalia in late January. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi stated that Ethiopia has accomplished its military mission. The challenges facing the proposed peacekeeping mission include funding the mission, which is expected to cost an estimated \$160 million for the first six months, and maintaining order in a country where many armed groups remain. The African Union is also facing difficulties getting governments to make serious troop contributions for the mission. Observers contend that without a negotiated settlement with groups still outside the TFG, it will be difficult to maintain peace and stability in Somalia. The peacekeeping mission is also mandated to:

- support dialogue and reconciliation in Somalia, working with all stakeholders,
- provide, as appropriate, protection to the TFIs and their key infrastructure, to enable them carry out their functions,
- assist in the implementation of the National Security and Stabilization Plan of Somalia, particularly the effective reestablishment and training of all inclusive Somali security forces, bearing in mind the programs already being implemented by some of Somalia's bilateral and multilateral partners,
- provide, within capabilities and as appropriate, technical and other support to the disarmament and stabilization efforts,
- monitor, in areas of deployment of its forces, the security situation,
- facilitate, as may be required and within capabilities, humanitarian operations, including the repatriation and reintegration of refugees and the resettlement of IDPs, and
- protect its personnel, installations and equipment, including the right of self-defense.⁴

On February 20, 2007, the U.N. Security Council passed resolution 1744 reiterating its support for the Transitional Federal Institutions and authorizing the African Union to establish a mission in Somalia. Resolution 1744 calls for “a national reconciliation congress involving all stakeholders, including political leaders, clan leaders, religious leaders, and representatives of civil society.” The resolution, while it welcomed the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops from Somalia, did not include a provision that restricts the participation of Somalia's immediate neighbors in the peacekeeping operation as resolution 1725 did.

⁴ Communique of the African Union Peace and Security Council 69th Meeting, January 19, 2007.

The Islamic Courts Union

In early 2006, factional violence in Mogadishu once again erupted, killing hundreds of civilians and displacing many more people. The surge in violence was between militia loyal to the Islamic Courts and a self-proclaimed anti-terrorism coalition backed by powerful local warlords. The fighting in Mogadishu erupted when the forces loyal to a well known warlord and then Minister of National Security of the TFG, Mohamed Qanyare, attacked one of the Courts. The fighting received unusual attention in Somalia and in the region due, in large part, to reports that the warlords were backed by the United States government. The Bush Administration acknowledged that Washington was assisting “responsible individuals” to help bring stability and fight terrorism in Somalia. Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Jendayi Fraser, reportedly stated that the United States “will work with those elements that will help us to root out Al Qaeda and prevent Somalia becoming a safe haven for terrorists.”⁵ In late June 2006, Fraser stated that the United States has three major policy goals in Somalia: counter-terrorism efforts, creation of an effective government, and responding to the humanitarian needs of the Somali people.

On February 18, 2006, the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism (ARPCT) was created. Very little is known about ARPCT, although the founders of the Alliance are known warlords who contributed to numerous armed clashes and instability in Somalia over the past decade. Members of the Alliance reportedly include Bashir Rage, Mohammed Qanyare Afrah, Muse Sudi Yalahow, Omar Finnish, and Abdirashid Shire Ilqyete. These actors were seen by many Somali groups as major obstacles to the creation of central authority in Mogadishu, as agreed to by all major Somali groups under the IGAD peace agreement in 2004. In early June 2006, Prime Minister Ali Mohamed Gedi dismissed four ministers from the Transitional Federal Government belonging to ARPCT.

These ministers include Mohamed Qanyare (National Security Minister), Musa Sudi Yalahow (Commerce Minister), Issa Botan Alin (Rehabilitation Minister), and Omar Finnish (Minister for Religious Affairs). The warlords were dismissed because they reportedly ignored calls by Prime Minister Gedi’s government to stop the fighting in Mogadishu. The Islamic Courts leaders argued then that the TFG did nothing to challenge these warlords and kept them in senior positions in the TFG until the Islamic Courts defeated the warlords in Mogadishu. In late July 2006, members of the TFG parliament complained that the U.S. government bypassed the TFG and provided support to the warlords, the same warlords who obstructed peace in Somalia. A member of the TFG parliament told a U.S. Congressional delegation in August 2006 that “you cannot fight terrorism by supporting warlords.”⁶

In early June 2006, the forces of the Islamic Courts captured Mogadishu, forcing ARPCT militia to flee the capital. The chairman of the Islamic Courts, Sharif

⁵ Peter Goodspeed, “Somalia Looking Like Pre-Taliban Afghanistan: U.S. Backed Warlords, Al Qaeda-Linked Thugs Kill Dozens” *National Post*, with files from News Services. May 16, 2006.

⁶ The author met with several Members of Parliament and the TFG Foreign Minister in Kenya in August 2006.

Shaykh Ahmed, stated that his group would negotiate with the TFG. In response to accusations that the Islamic Courts Union was associated with or had harbored international terrorist elements, Shaykh Ahmed stated that “we are not terrorists and we will not allow anyone to hijack the capital. We have said hundreds of times that America’s talk of terrorism in Somalia is fabricated and serves suspicious political purposes.”⁷

The forces of the Islamic Courts Union strengthened and expanded areas under their control after the defeat of the warlords in Mogadishu. The Islamic Courts forces captured the towns of Jowhar and Beledweyne in mid-June 2006. Moreover, for the first time in years, Mogadishu became relatively peaceful, and the Islamic Courts received support from the population in areas it controlled. The level of support enjoyed by the Islamic Courts is difficult to measure, although the group had constituencies from multiple sub-clans and had broad support among Somali women. According to Somali sources in Mogadishu and Islamic Courts officials, the people provided crucial support by feeding their forces and working with Islamic Courts officials in bringing peace and stability. During the Mogadishu fighting, women supporters of ICU played important roles. Since the Islamic Courts largely functioned as providers of social services, the Courts did not maintain a large fighting force. The warlords maintained a robust force in different parts of Mogadishu, with heavy weapons and “technicals” (machine-guns mounted on pickup trucks). The Islamic Courts group had only four technicals when the fighting erupted with Qanyare and other warlords, according to a senior Courts official. The ICU success in Mogadishu effectively led to the collapse of the ARPCT and forced the warlords to flee.

Negotiations between the Transitional Federal Government and the Islamic Courts in Sudan did not lead to a major breakthrough, although the talks ended speculation that the Islamic Courts rejected negotiations. The Islamic Courts leaders stated that they would work with the Baidoa-based transitional government, although disagreement on key issues remained. In June 2006, the transitional parliament voted in favor of a foreign peacekeeping force. But this move was rejected by some Islamic Courts leaders as being unnecessary and counter-productive. Earlier, in 2005, the African Union had approved a proposal for Uganda and Sudan to deploy a peacekeeping force to Somalia under the auspices of the IGAD. The deployment did not take place in large part because of the refusal of the United Nations Security Council to remove a United Nations arms embargo on Somalia. The Bush Administration did not support the lifting of the arms embargo, although the United Nations Security Council did provide the necessary exemption in December 2006.

In mid-June, an International Somalia Contact Group, consisting of the United States, Norway, United Kingdom, Sweden, Italy, Tanzania, and the European Union, was formed and met to discuss the unfolding Somalia crisis. The United Nations, the African Union, the Arab League, and IGAD were also invited as observers. The Contact Group did not invite Somalia’s immediate neighbors, in part due to Somali opposition and international concern that these countries are engaged in activities in

⁷ *Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS)*. “Somali Islamic Courts Leader Comments on Domestic Situation, Future Outlook.” Al-Ashraq Al-Awsat. June 6, 2006.

support of or against some groups in Somalia. In a press release after its first meeting, the Contact Group stated that “the goal of the International Contact Group will be to encourage positive political developments and engagement with actors inside Somali to support the implementation of the Transitional Federal Charter and Institutions. The Contact Group will seek to support efforts, within the framework of the Transitional Federal Institutions, to address the humanitarian needs of the Somali people, establish effective governance and stability, and address the international community’s concern regarding terrorism.” Meanwhile, in early January 2007, the International Contact Group on Somalia issued another communique strongly urging that it is “essential that an inclusive process of political dialogue and reconciliation embracing representative clan, religious, business, civil society, women’s, and other political groups who reject violence and extremism be launched without delay.”

The Islamic Courts, while well received by the people in the areas the Courts controlled, received bad press coverage, especially in the West. The Courts’ activities were often characterized as extremist and jihadist. The Islamic Courts was accused of shutting down cinemas and prohibiting women from working. Some of these measures were taken by the Courts, although for different reasons and not because of the Courts’ alleged jihadist and extremist ideology. For example, movies were banned in the morning in response to requests from parents because Somali children were going to movies in the morning instead of school.⁸ The ban on television did not take place, except for restrictions on watching soccer games late at night, according to Islamic Courts officials and Somali residents in Mogadishu. This measure was reportedly taken because of disturbances and fighting late at night. There is no evidence to support the allegation that women were prohibited from working. Islamic Courts officials point out that in the short time they were in power, they did more than restore law and order. Properties taken by warlords were returned to the rightful owners. For example, the family of President Yusuf reportedly returned to Mogadishu after almost sixteen years when the Courts restored order in the capital, according to an Islamic Courts official. Most important, they argue, they gave hope to the people of Somalia that after over a decade of violence they can live in peace.

The Leadership of the Somali Council of the Islamic Courts

Our knowledge of the top leadership of the Somali Council of the Islamic Courts (SCIC) is sketchy. The leadership is often referred to as jihadist, extremist, and at times terrorist by some observers without much evidence to support the allegations. For example, the assessment of the Islamic Courts by U.S. officials was that less than 5 percent of the Islamic Courts leadership can be considered extremist, according to a senior State Department official. In late June 2006, the Courts established a consultative body to function as the legislative (Shura) arm of the

⁸ The author had over 25 conversations between July 2006 and March 2007 with senior Islamic Courts officials and Somali residents in Mogadishu.

Courts. Hassan Dahir Aweys was elected to head the Legislative Council. Aweys was one of the top leaders of the now-defunct Al-Ittihad Al-Islamiya (AIAI — for more see below) and was designated by the Bush Administration as a terrorist. Sharif Sheik Ahmed, the leader of the Courts, was appointed chairman of the Council's Executive Committee to lead the day-to-day affairs of the Courts. Some observers and government officials have erroneously described Aweys as the leader of the Courts. However, the moderate leader of the Courts, Sharif Sheik Ahmed, was never replaced by Aweys. Some observers argue that referring to Aweys as the leader of the Courts was deliberately designed by some groups and governments to give the Courts a bad image.

The leadership of the Islamic Courts has remained largely under the control of religious scholars and academics (see below). The focus by some observers and officials on three individuals, Aweys, Hassan Al-Turki, and Aden Ayro, may have been to show the Islamic Courts as a group controlled and influenced by these individuals. Al-Turki, a man born in the ethnically Somali Ogaden region of Ethiopia, was listed by the Bush administration as a terrorist because of his membership in Al-Ittihad. According to Courts officials, Al-Turki did not even hold a leadership position within the organization. Both Aweys and Al-Turki were placed on the list because of their membership in Al-Ittihad and their support for the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) in Ethiopia. There is no public record to support that these individuals were engaged in terrorist activities against U.S. or western interests. Ayro's role within the Courts appears highly exaggerated since he did not have a leadership position in the organization. Ayro is often referred to as the leader of the Shibaab, the Youth, although there is no evidence to support that he was the leader of that group. Ayro is suspected of killing four aid workers in the breakaway region of Somaliland as well as a Somali scholar in Mogadishu named Abdulqadir Yahya.

The Top Leaders of the Courts

The Executive Council

Sheikh Sharif Ahmed. Received a Law Degree from a University in Libya; served as President of Somali Intellectuals Associations; President of the District Court in Jowhar; President of Somali Council of Islamic Courts (SCIC); never been active in politics; married with two children.

Abdurahman Muhamoud Farah. Vice President of SCIC. Studied in Mogadishu; a longtime advocate of peace and clan unity; never active in politics.

Abdulqadir Ali Omar. Vice President of SCIC. Longtime advocate of clan unity; religious scholar, and advocated against abuses by the warlords.

Ibrahim Hassan Addou. Foreign Secretary and a member of the Shura (Legislative Council) of the SCIC; Ph.D., MA, BA from American University, Washington, D.C.; Worked at American University from 1981 to 1992; held several

positions at Benadir University in Mogadishu, including Vice President for Academic Affairs and President; married with three children.

The Legislative Council or Shura

Hassan Dahir Aweys. Speaker of the Shura. Former army officer in the Somali Armed Forces; fought in the Ethiopia-Somalia wars in the 1970s; former senior member of Al-Ittihad; fought against Ethiopia and Abdullahi Yusuf in the mid-1990s.

Omar Imam Abubakar. Number two in the Shura and effectively the most influential and active member of the Shura; received his Ph.D. from a University in Saudi Arabia; lectured in Mauritania and Somalia for many years.

Abdulahi Ali Afrah. Senior leader in the Shura. Holds a BA in Agriculture, longtime civil servant in the Siad Barre government; received an MA from a University in the U.S. and lived in Canada for many years.

Muhamoud Ibrahim Suleh. Senior member of the Shura, son of a well known religious leader.

Leadership of the Transitional Federal Government

Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed. President of the TFG. A former senior army officer in Somalia; imprisoned by Siad Barre; attempted a coup against Barre in 1978 and later fled Somalia; led one of the first armed groups against Siad Barre with Ethiopian support; imprisoned by Ethiopian military dictator Mengistu Hailemariam in 1985 and released in 1991 after the ouster of the Mengistu regime by the current government; leader of the autonomous northeastern region of Puntland until 2001.

Ali Mohamed Gedi. Prime Minister of the TFG. Studied in Somalia and Italy; A veterinarian by training; a lecturer and researcher at the Somali National University; no affiliation with warlords or political groups.

Sharif Hassan Sheik Adan. Former Speaker of Transitional Federal Parliament. Ousted from his position in January 2007; vocal critic of Ethiopia's intervention; had serious disagreements with President Yusuf; initiated negotiations with Courts leadership; a businessman and an advocate of reconciliation efforts.

Adan Mohamed Nur Madobe. Speaker of Parliament of the TFG. A former warlord and served as the Deputy Chairman of the Rahanweyn Resistance Army (RRA) and as Justice Minister of the TFG.

Hassan Muhammad Nur Shatigadud. Minister of Finance of the TFG; a known warlord and Chairman of the RRA.

Barre Adan Shire Hiiraale. Minister of defense. Served as the Chairman of the Juba Valley Alliance; Studied at West Point and served as army Colonel in the Barre regime; former commander of the Somali National Front (SNF).

Hussein Farah Aideed. Minister of Public Works and Housing. Served as Minister of Interior from 2005 to February 7, 2007; son of former faction leader Mohamed Farah Aideed; studied and lived in the United States; succeeded his father after his death in 1996.

Ethiopia-Somalia Relations

For over four decades, relations between successive Ethiopian governments and Somalia have been poor. Somalia invaded Ethiopia twice in the 1960s under Emperor Haile Selassie and in 1976 during the Mengistu Haile Mariam military rule. In the first war, the Ethiopian military commander General Aman Andom defeated Somali forces, but his request to go inside Somalia was rejected by the Emperor, and he was ordered to remain behind the border. The 1976 invasion of Ethiopia by Somali forces and Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) initially succeeded, leading to the capture of many Ethiopian towns by Somali forces. Somali forces briefly captured the third largest city, Dire Dawa, in Eastern Ethiopia. However, Ethiopian forces, with the support of Cuban and South Yemeni forces, were able to defeat the Somali forces, although elements of the Somali rebel forces remained in control of remote areas in the largely Somali inhabited areas of Ethiopia.

Both Ethiopian and Somali governments intervened in the internal affairs of the two countries, and successive governments on both sides supported each others' armed opposition groups. The current president of the Transitional Federal Government, President Abdullahi Yusuf, was one of the first to receive Ethiopia's assistance after he fled Somalia in the late 1970s. He was one of the first senior officials to challenge the Siad Barre government. Ethiopia was also the principal backer of the Somali National Movement (SNM), the group that liberated the northwest region of Somalia, currently known as Somaliland. The change of government in Ethiopia did not end Ethiopia's intervention in Somali affairs. The current government of Ethiopia became a key backer of a number of Somali factions and leaders, including the current president of the TFG, Abdullahi Yusuf, Hussein Aideed, and other Somali factions.

The Barre government was also a major sponsor of Ethiopian armed rebel groups. The current ruling party of Ethiopia, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), received assistance from Somali authorities and a number of the EPRDF leaders reportedly carried Somali-issued passports. Other rebel groups, including the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), also received assistance from Somalia. The ouster of the Siad Barre government and the absence of a central government in Somalia ended support for Ethiopian armed groups, although some Somali factions continue to support the ONLF. For most of the 1990s, Ethiopia's primary concern was Al-Ittihad in Somalia and its activities in support of the ONLF.

Al-Ittihad and ONLF carried out a number of attacks against Ethiopian targets, and Ethiopian security forces have violently retaliated against these groups and their supporters. The fighting with Al-Ittihad was triggered in the early 1990s when Ethiopian security forces brutally cracked down on the Ogaden National Liberation Front, a member of the first transitional government of Ethiopia. The ONLF joined the transitional government of Ethiopia in part because the Ethiopian Transitional Charter provided nations and nationalities the right to self determination; however, the ONLF push for self determination created tension between the ruling EPRDF and the ONLF.

In the early 1990s, Ethiopian security forces assassinated a number of ONLF leaders, cracked down on the organization, and moved the Ethiopian Somali Region capital from Gode to Jijiga, a central government stronghold. Members of the ONLF fled to Somalia and were embraced by Al-Ittihad, a fairly new group at that time. Hence, some observers view Al-Ittihad as a group largely concerned with domestic issues. Ethiopia's principal interest at that time was to ensure that a united Somalia did not pose a threat to Ethiopia and that the Somali-inhabited-region of Ethiopia remained stable. Ethiopian forces attacked Somalia a number of times over the past decade and often maintained presence inside Somali territory. Ethiopia's relationship with the current president of the TFG was strengthened when Yusuf backed Ethiopia's efforts against Al-Ittihad in the 1990s. The Ethiopian government's animosity towards the ousted Shura leader of the Islamic Courts, Sheik Aweys, is linked to Aweys' role as one of the leaders of Al-Ittihad fighting against Ethiopia and that of Abdullahi Yusuf.

In 2004, the government of Ethiopia released a report, *the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia's Foreign Policy, Security Policy and Strategy*. The 158-page report covers a wide range of issues, including Ethiopia's assessment of its relations with Somalia. The report states that Somalia attacked Ethiopia twice in pursuit of its Greater Somalia ambition. The report notes that "at this time the Greater Somalia agenda has failed." Moreover, the Greater Somalia agenda no longer poses a serious threat to Ethiopia. The report contends that the factionalization of Somalia has allowed anti-peace and extremists elements to become strong, posing a threat to Ethiopia. In order to reduce the threat from some parts of Somalia, the Ethiopian government must pursue a policy of engagement and support to Puntland and Somaliland, according to the report. The report also recommends a policy of targeting those armed elements that threaten Ethiopian security. This report was released two years before the Islamic Courts emerged, although the report gave the same labels of extremist, terrorist, and anti-peace to groups that were dominant at that time.

Somalia: Background

In 1991, General Mohamed Siad Barre, who came to power through a military coup in 1969, was ousted from power by several Somali armed groups. Following the collapse of central authority in Mogadishu, rival Somali groups engaged in armed struggle for personal political power and prevented food and medicine from reaching innocent civilians suffering from drought and famine. An estimated 500,000 people

died from violence, starvation, and disease as Somalia was wracked by continued internal chaos. On November 9, 1992, then- President George H.W. Bush authorized Operation Restore Hope, using the U.S. military, to safeguard non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and their efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to the suffering Somali civilian population.

The U.S.-led United Task Force (UNITAF) successfully subdued the warlords and armed factions and enabled NGOs to safely provide humanitarian relief to Somalis. In May 1993, UNITAF handed over the operation to the United Nations. The U.N. effort was known as United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) II. In May 1993, UNOSOM II coalition forces were attacked by one of the factions in Mogadishu. On October 3, 1993, after a seventeen-hour battle between U.S. troops and Somali factions in Mogadishu, in which 18 U.S. Rangers were killed, President Clinton ordered the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Somalia. In March 1994, the United States completely pulled out of Somalia and, one year later, the United Nations pulled out the remaining peacekeepers. Since the withdrawal of United Nations forces in March 1995, Somalia has been without a central government and has been splintered into several regions controlled by clan-based factions.

Peace Processes

There have been 14 Somali reconciliation or peace conferences to bring an end to the fighting in Somalia since the early 1990s. Some were held under the auspices of or were supported by the United Nations, or governments in the Horn of Africa. These efforts have largely failed to bring about lasting peace in Somalia. Moreover, competing efforts by international actors contributed to the failure of peace efforts in Somalia. In 1996, the Government of Ethiopia convened a peace process in the resort town of Sodere, Ethiopia. Many political actors and armed factions participated, although a few boycotted the peace process. The Sodere process collapsed when the government of Egypt convened another meeting of the Somali groups in Cairo in 1997. Subsequently, the Cairo initiative failed when yet another peace conference was convened by Somali factions in Bosaso, Somalia in 1998. In February 2000, IGAD approved a peace plan proposed by the government of Djibouti. In May 2000, the Somali Reconciliation Conference opened in Arta, Djibouti in which 400 delegates took part for several months of deliberation. The Arta process was boycotted by several powerful warlords, as well as the governments of Somaliland and Puntland.

On August 13, 2000, participants agreed to the creation of a Transitional National Government (TNG) and a Transitional National Assembly (TNA). On August 26, 2000, participants nominated Abdulqassim Salad Hassan as president of the TNG. In October 2002, the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development launched another peace process, led by the government of Kenya. An estimated 350 delegates from different regions of Somalia participated in the opening session of the conference in the Kenyan town of Eldoret. The Government of Somaliland boycotted the conference. In the first phase of the conference, the parties signed a temporary cease-fire, and agreed to respect and honor the outcome of the conference. The parties further agreed to establish a federal system of government and committed themselves to fight terrorism. In September 2003, the parties agreed on a Transitional National Charter, paving the way for a National Unity government.

In August 2004, a new Transitional Somali Parliament was inaugurated in Kenya. The 275-member parliament consists of the major political factions and seems to represent all the major clans of Somalia. The Transitional Charter allocated 61 seats for the major four clans and 31 seats for the small clans. The Charter also allocated 12% of the seats to women. The Charter accepted Islam as the national religion and agreed that *Sharia* law would be the basis of national legislation. In fact, previous Somali constitutions had similar provisions. In October 2004, the Somali Transitional Parliament elected Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed as the new president of Somalia. The swearing in ceremony was attended by 11 heads of government from African countries and representatives from regional organizations and the United Nations.

In November 2004, President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed appointed Professor Ali Mohamed Gedi as prime minister. The transitional government, however, was not able to function effectively or move to Mogadishu in large part due to opposition from the warlords in Mogadishu, even though some of these warlords signed the agreement and were ministers in the government. The inability of the transitional government to establish effective control allowed warlords and clan factions to dominate many parts of Somalia until late December 2006. Some observers contend that the defeat of the warlords by the Islamic Courts paved the way for the establishment of central authority in Mogadishu.

Somalia: Safe Haven for Terrorist Groups?

The United States, Somali neighbors, and some Somali groups have expressed concern over the years about the spread of Islamic fundamentalism in Somalia. In the mid-1990s, Islamic courts began to emerge in parts of the country, especially in the capital of Mogadishu. These courts functioned as local governments and often enforced decisions by using their own Islamic militia. Members of the Al-Ittihad militia (see background below) reportedly provided the bulk of the security forces for these courts in the areas AIAI had a presence. The absence of central authority in Somalia created an environment conducive to the proliferation of armed factions throughout the country. Ethiopian security forces invaded Somalia on a number of occasions to disrupt the activities of Al-Ittihad and its allies or in support of certain armed factions.

Somali factions, including the so-called Islamic groups, often go through realignments or simply disappear from the scene. Very little is known about the leadership or organizational structure of these groups, including Al-Ittihad. There have been three known Islamic groups in Somalia whose prominence has alternately waxed and waned: Al-Ittihad Al-Islamiya (mentioned below), Al-Islah (Reform), and Al-Tabligh (Conveyers of God's Work). In 1995, a group called Jihad al-Islam, led by Sheikh Abbas bin Omar, emerged in Mogadishu, and gave the two main warlords, General Mohamed Farah Aideed and Ali Mahdi, an ultimatum to end their factional fighting. The group claimed at that time that it maintained offices in several countries, including Yemen, Pakistan, Kenya, and Sudan. Not much was heard subsequently from Jihad al-Islam, although a group of Somalis later formed the *Sharia* (Islamic law) Implementation Club (SIC) in 1996.

SIC's principal objective was to establish *Sharia* courts throughout the country. Some members of the Mogadishu-based former Transitional National Government (TNG) reportedly were key players in the establishment of these courts. Very little is known about al-Islah, although it is perceived as a group dominated by Hawiye clan businessmen. According to the State Department's 2006 *Country Reports on Terrorism*, "while numerous Islamist groups engaged in a broad range of activities operate inside Somalia, few of these organizations have any known links to terrorist activities. Movements such as Harakat al-Islah (al-Islah), Ahlu Sunna wal Jamaa (ASWJ), and Majma Ulimadda Islaamka ee Soomaaliya (Majma') sought power by political rather than violent means and pursued political action via missionary or charity work. Missionary Islamists, such as followers of the Tablighi sect and the "New Salafis" generally renounce explicit political activism. Other Islamist organizations became providers of basic health, education, and commercial services, and were perceived by some as pursuing a strategy to take political power."

U.S. officials have long expressed concern about the presence of known terrorist individuals in East Africa. Some observers contend that Somalia is being used as a transit and hiding place by some of these individuals, including Haroon Fazul, the leader of the 1998 and 2002 bombings, Saleh Nabhan, and Talha al-Sudani. But no Somali group has been directly linked to any terrorist attacks against the U.S. or its allies.

Al-Ittihad

Al-Ittihad was perhaps the most active and at one point most successful of all the Islamic groups. Al-Ittihad is an Islamic group whose principal ideology was to establish an Islamic state and to bring law and order by utilizing the Islamic court system. Founded in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Al-Ittihad unsuccessfully sought to replace clan and warlord politics with an Islamic state. In the early 1990s, Al-Ittihad had modest successes; for example, it administered territories under its control in the south. But Al-Ittihad never emerged as a major military or political force in Somalia. The clan-based groups and factions led by warlords in Mogadishu are secular and have been at odds with Al-Ittihad, even though some of these groups maintained tactical alliances from time to time with Al-Ittihad. Al-Ittihad's failure to maintain control over territories and spread its ideology led to a shift in strategy in the mid-1990s. Al-Ittihad abandoned its ambition to spread its ideology through military means and began to concentrate on providing social services to communities through Islamic schools and health care centers.

Al-Ittihad's social activities and religious objectives in Somalia seemed inconsistent with its activities in support of armed groups in the Somali-inhabited region of Ethiopia. In Ethiopia, Al-Ittihad was reportedly engaged in military activities in support of ethnic Somalis. Several anti-Ethiopian groups are active in the Somali region and Al-Ittihad cooperated with these groups in carrying out attacks against Ethiopian targets. In 1999, the Ogaden Islamic Union under the leadership of Muhammad Muallem Omar Abdi, the Somali People's Liberation Front under the leadership of Ahmed Ali Ismail, and the Western Somali Liberation Front under the leadership of Muhammad Haji Ibrahim Hussein formed a coalition called the United Front for the Liberation of Western Somalia, their term for the Somali-inhabited

region of Ethiopia.⁹ The Ogaden National Liberation Front was engaged in military activities in the region, and in the past formed alliances with other Ethiopian opposition groups.

Many Somali watchers believe that Al-Ittihad's strength was highly exaggerated and that information about its alleged links with international terrorist organizations is unreliable. The State Department's *Country Reports on Terrorism* stated in 2006 that "in recent years the existence of a coherent entity operating as AIAI (Al-Ittihad) has become difficult to prove." There is no reliable information or pattern of behavior to suggest that Al-Ittihad had an international agenda as was the case with the National Islamic Front (NIF) government of Sudan. Some observers note that if Al-Ittihad had a clear internationally-oriented agenda, its obvious ally in the region would be the NIF regime in Sudan or the Sudanese-backed Eritrean Islamic Jihad. The Sudanese regime did back regional extremist groups and international terrorist organizations, but there was no apparent relationship between the NIF and Al-Ittihad. Many Somalis often refer to Al-Ittihad's social services and the peace and stability that prevailed in the areas it controlled.

In late September 2001, the Bush Administration added Al-Ittihad to a list of terrorism-related entities whose assets were frozen by an Executive Order. Bush Administration officials accused Al-Ittihad of links with Al Qaeda. The Administration did not publicly offer evidence supporting its allegations, but some officials asserted that links between AIAI and Al Qaeda date back to the U.S. presence in Somalia during Operation Restore Hope (1992-1994). This assertion, however, seems inconsistent with the reality on the ground at that time, according to some observers. Then, the dominant players in Mogadishu were the warlords and not Al-Ittihad. In early November 2001, federal authorities raided several Somali-owned money transfer businesses in the United States operated by Al-Barakaat Companies. The Bush Administration ordered the assets of Al-Barakaat frozen because of its alleged links to Al Qaeda. U.S. officials, however, later seemed to back off from their earlier assertion that Al-Barakaat and individuals associated with the money transfer business sector are directly linked to Al Qaeda. In September 2002, U.S. officials cleared three Somalis and three Al-Barakaat branches accused of ties with Al Qaeda. The three individuals and businesses were removed from the U.S. Treasury Department list of terrorist supporters and their assets were also unfrozen. Nonetheless, the Bush Administration remains concerned about terrorist activities in Somalia, although no attacks against U.S. interests have been carried out by any known Somali groups. The United States has had no presence in Somalia since Washington pulled out of the peacekeeping operation in 1994.

⁹ *Foreign Broadcast Information Services (FBIS)*. "Islamists Regroup Their Forces After Ethiopian Preemptive Strike," May 17-23, 1999.

Figure 1. Major Somali Clans and Subclans

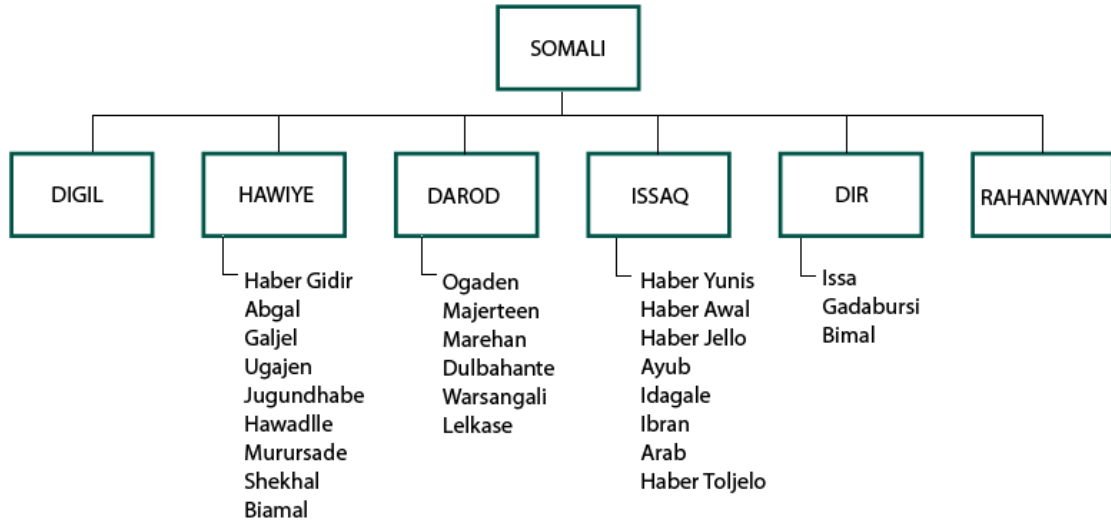


Figure 2. Map of Somalia



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