



Is Somalia Dangerous? U.S. Policy in the Horn of Africa

Eunice Reddick, Office Director of East African Affairs

Remarks to American Enterprise Institute (AEI)

Washington, DC

October 4, 2006

On behalf of Assistant Secretary Frazer, I would like to thank the American Enterprise Institute for inviting me to participate in this panel and for the opportunity to explore with you the U.S. policy towards Somalia. Rather than use my time to discuss the current situation in Somalia, which I will leave to the other members of this panel, I would like to outline U.S. policy objectives in Somalia and our recent efforts in support of these objectives.

The complex and fluid dynamics inside Somalia require us to constantly review and update our approach to respond to new developments and support our policy objectives. In recent years, we have seen the adoption of a Transitional Federal Charter following a two-year reconciliation process in Kenya, the formation of the Transitional Federal Institutions and subsequent political divisions and disputes among the members of those institutions, the partial resolution of those disputes in January 2006, and more recently, the rise of the Union of Islamic Courts as a political force in southern Somalia, followed by a lengthy process of political dialogue between the leaders of the Transitional Federal Institutions and the Islamic courts. In addition, the United States continues to engage with and support positive developments in the self-declared Republic of Somaliland, which held parliamentary elections in September 2005.

Despite these rapidly changing dynamics, the goals for United States policy remain clear: address the threat of terrorism, support the reestablishment of effective governance and political stability, respond to the humanitarian needs of the Somali people, and promote regional security and stability. While counter-terrorism remains a core concern for the United States, it is not the only precept of our engagement strategy. To address Somalia's instability, we must also focus on governance and institution building, and continued provision of humanitarian assistance. In this regard, the United States is the largest bilateral donor of humanitarian assistance to Somalia (over \$90 million in fiscal year 2006), and U.S. development assistance programs are mitigating conflicts through support for peacebuilding efforts and Somali civil society, while also promoting stability by helping the Somali people develop more productive and self-sufficient livelihoods.

The United States also continues to coordinate closely with our international partners in Somalia. In June, the United States joined Norway, Sweden, the European Union, the African Union, the Arab League, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Italy, Tanzania, the United Kingdom, and the United Nations to form the International Somalia Contact Group to coordinate international engagement in Somalia and support the return of effective governance and stability in Somalia.

It is the Somali people, however, who are ultimately responsible for the establishment of a functioning central government. The United States believes that the Transitional Federal Charter, which enjoys broad public support inside Somalia, and Transitional Federal Institutions offer the Somali people a way forward through a transitional political process leading to a transfer to an elected, representative government by 2010. However, the existence of the Charter and Institutions does not obviate the need for inclusive political dialogue and the inclusion of key stakeholders into the ongoing transitional process. The Charter provides a viable framework for this process of inclusive dialogue among all key stakeholders, including between the leaders of the Transitional Federal Institutions and Islamic courts.

The dialogue taking place between the Islamic courts and Transitional Federal Institutions in Khartoum, which began on June 22 and took place again on September 4, must resume as soon as possible, and should eventually also be expanded to include the broader elements of Somali society, including civil society leaders, business leaders, regional authorities, religious leaders, clan elders, and other key stakeholder groups. The International Somalia Contact Group intends to encourage this dialogue in a way that promotes respect for the Transitional Federal Charter and inclusion of the Islamic courts into the Transitional Federal Institutions.

Somalia cannot continue to serve as a safe haven for terrorists. Several foreign al Qaeda operatives have taken refuge in Somalia, including some of the individuals who perpetrated the 1998 bombings of two United States embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya, as well as the 2002 attacks against an Israeli airliner and hotel in Mombasa, Kenya. The United States government has called upon the leaders within the Islamic courts to support efforts to bring foreign terrorist operatives currently in Somalia to justice. Such affirmative steps would demonstrate the positive intentions of the Islamic courts, as well as improve regional stability and domestic security in Somalia. The United States is committed to working with all Somalis, regardless of clan, religious, or secular affiliation, to deny terrorists the ability to plan, operate, and execute terrorist attacks from Somalia.

Somalia also constitutes a general security risk for the broader region. This reality compels American policymakers to consider a regional approach that seeks to improve stability both in Somalia and its neighbors. Toward that end, the United States government is continuing to work with East African countries to build their capacity to counter terrorism and criminality that originates in Somalia through follow-on measures to the President's East Africa Counter-terrorism Initiative (EACTI), which was originally announced in 2003. We have continued to coordinate our regional counter-terrorism efforts in East Africa through a field-driven process known as the Regional Strategic Initiative (RSI) that facilitates coordination among U.S. embassies from Yemen to Sudan to Tanzania.

These security, governance and development issues facing the United States government in Somalia are complex and not easily defined. Nor can they be resolved easily or with simple strategies. We recognize that there are no easy answers and seek to ensure that our engagement can adapt to changing dynamics and future developments in Somalia. This challenge has been compounded by longstanding insecurity, which limits the presence of foreign diplomats and other outside actors inside Somalia. We continue to work to cultivate and utilize the existing international and regional consensus on the way forward in Somalia through continued close engagement with our international partners. We are working closely with our constructive partners, while seeking to deter any state or non-state actors that are playing damaging roles.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

 [BACK TO TOP](#)

Published by the U.S. Department of State Website at <http://www.state.gov> maintained by the Bureau of Public Affairs.