

# SOMALIA'S CURRENT SECURITY AND STABILITY STATUS

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## HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA AND  
GLOBAL HEALTH POLICY

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS  
UNITED STATES SENATE

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## **SOMALIA'S CURRENT SECURITY AND STABILITY STATUS**

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 14, 2018**

U.S. SENATE,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA AND GLOBAL HEALTH POLICY,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:00 a.m. in Room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Jeff Flake, Chairman of the Subcommittee, presiding.

Present: Senators Flake [presiding], Young, Booker, and Merkley.

### **OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JEFF FLAKE, U.S. SENATOR FROM ARIZONA**

Senator FLAKE. This hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health will come to order.

We thank the witnesses for coming. I know it is difficult getting in the building this morning and a cold outside wait. So thank you.

Somalia is often used as an example of a failed state, but the re-establishment of a federal government and subsequent elections have created hope for a change there in Somalia. In his visit last week, the Somali Prime Minister described his country as being at a period of opportunity where it could turn the page or it could backslide.

Senator Booker and I are holding this hearing to demonstrate the interest of the United States in helping Somalia to turn that page. For Somalia and the surrounding region, U.S. interests abroad, the stakes are simply too high to let the country backslide.

Terrorism remains a real threat. Al-Shabaab was named the most potent threat to U.S. interests in East Africa by our intelligence community last year, and ISIS also remains a factor in Somalia.

The Somali National Army will eventually take over from AMISOM, but that force remains disorganized and faces serious readiness challenges despite receiving ongoing assistance and support from the United States. Despite these challenges, AMISOM is proceeding with plans to draw down its troops by 2020.

Basic governance also remains the challenge for the Somali Government which cannot yet provide services to its citizens like roads and access to schools and hospitals.

In short, the situation in Somalia remains tenuous, and has not been helped by offensive rhetoric emanating from the White House, a long freeze of admission of refugees from Somalia, and prohibitions on Somali travel to the United States.

The purpose of this hearing is to review the situation in Somalia and examine how U.S. policies can best support peace and stability in Somalia.

With that, I will turn it over to Senator Booker for his opening statements, and I appreciate his encouragement to hold this hearing and we are very interested in what is going on. So thank you.

**STATEMENT OF HON. CORY BOOKER,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW JERSEY**

Senator BOOKER. I want to submit my formal opening statement for the record.

I am really looking forward to this conversation. I am grateful for the leadership of Senator Flake on these issues.

I have a lot of very pressing concerns. We have extreme challenges right now with our diplomatic efforts in Somalia. I was very taken by the fact that we had our Secretary of State in the midst of a very important trip to the continent of Africa, having that trip undercut by continuing disorder, chaos within our diplomatic corps. I am concerned that we do not have an ambassador placed here. I am concerned that at a time where we have a region in instability, we do not have an overall strategy everywhere from Syria to Yemen. We have proxy wars and competition going on that are deeply affecting this area. We have a state that is showing signs of progress but still ranked as one of the most corrupt states in the country. There are a lot of really pressing issues, not to mention the security concerns we have and, frankly, something that Senator Flake has been a leader on, along with some of my colleagues, about just under what authorization are we using military force, who are we targeting, and again under what authorization.

There is so much within this topic that not only deals with a real crisis, a humanitarian crisis, a security crisis, but also with larger themes and larger issues that are affecting the globe as a whole and American security overall.

I read each of your testimonies with great appreciation, what you prepared for us in a written way, but I am really looking forward to this conversation. There is a lot going on in Washington today, and he and I are both split between numerous committees, I believe a very pressing conversation about gun violence in our country. But this is so important and America's role, as you all know, is essential, especially at a time that China's influence is rising in that region. So let us get to the conversation.

But, again, I am just so grateful to my colleague and friend, Senator Flake, for hosting this committee hearing.

Thank you, Chairman Flake for holding this hearing and thank you to the witnesses for being here today. I look forward to your testimonies.

[The prepared statement of Senator Booker follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR BOOKER

Chairman Flake, thank you for holding this hearing and thank you to the witnesses for being here.

Before I turn to my prepared remarks, I'd like to spend a couple minutes on the President's firing of Secretary of State Tillerson.

I have had serious concerns with the Secretary Tillerson's leadership at the State Department, especially the mass exodus of foreign service officers with decades of experience and his efforts to cut funding to the State Department.

Yesterday's incidents, however, raise deep concerns about the way U.S. foreign policy will be made in the White House going forward. With Secretary Tillerson leaving the State Department, the President is now approaching major foreign policy concerns without a confirmed team in place.

Negotiations with North Korea, an arbitrary, a self-imposed deadline to "fix" the Iran deal on May 12, and the opening of an Embassy facility in Jerusalem also in May await a State Department with Acting leaders at every level, and now at the highest level.

My colleagues and I on this subcommittee were pleased to hear about Secretary Tillerson's official visit to some of our closest allies in Africa including Djibouti, Kenya, and Nigeria.

That Secretary Tillerson was effectively removed from his office before even completing his trip is another troubling statement to the world, that the national security of the United States is subject to the whims of this President who demands unabashed loyalty over any dissent or competing views on, what the Chairman I'm sure would agree, are complicated matters.

Now, to Somalia.

The 2012 election of President Hassan (Ha-Sun) Shiekh Mohamud (Mo-ha-mud), through an internationally supported process was a milestone in the country—the first time since the 1991 overthrow of President Said Barre (See-yad Bar-ay) that a new leader had been chosen inside the country.

The subsequent election of current President Hassan Sheikh Mohammad aka "Farmajo" and the peaceful transfer of power has given the international community hope for a government that has crossed the threshold from failed to fragile state.

Despite these hopeful signs, armed conflict persists with African Union troops fighting to liberate parts of the country still held under the brutal rule of Al-Shabab. In some areas, the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate, compounded by restrictions on humanitarian access imposed by Al-Shabab, human rights violations by government security forces, and acute food insecurity.

Cyclical droughts and violent conflict have caused mass displacement and Somalia remains one of the largest generators of refugees in the world. I fear that as humanitarian appeals get larger, the international community will lurch from crisis to crisis without taking stock of what can build long term resilience for the country such as anti-corruption efforts, youth employment, and inclusive governance.

Finally, today in Somalia, over 500 U.S. military personnel are on the ground. DoD has publically acknowledged more than 30 strikes in 2017, more than twice the number in 2016; and 10 times the number of strikes prior to 2015.

As the committee that authorizes the use of force, it is important that we understand the scope of U.S. military operations in Somalia and its implications.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you, Senator Booker.

The subcommittee will now hear testimony from four distinguished experts on Somalia. Each brings a wealth of experience and all have rearranged their schedules to be here today. It is much appreciated, and I appreciated meeting a few of you in my office earlier last week. So thank you for coming there.

We will hear today from Mr. Abdirashid Hashi, Dr. Tricia Bacon, Mr. Mark Yarnell, and Dr. E.J. Hogendoorn.

Mr. Hashi is the Executive Director of the Heritage Institute for Policy Studies, an impressive think tank in Somalia. He has also served Somalia's Government in various roles, included in the offices of the Prime Minister and the presidency.

Dr. Bacon is the Assistant Professor at American University and spent 10 years at the Department of State working on counterterrorism issues.

Mr. Mark Yarnell is a Senior Advocate for Refugees International and has a background working on humanitarian relief issues.

Dr. Hogendoorn is the Deputy Program Director for the International Crisis Group and has previously served as an arms expert with the United Nations Panel of Experts on Somalia.

With that, we will recognize Mr. Hashi.

**STATEMENT OF ABDIRASHID HASHI, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
HERITAGE INSTITUTE FOR POLICY STUDIES, MOGADISHU,  
SOMALIA**

Mr. HASHI. Good morning. Thank you very much for inviting me here today.

I arrived from Mogadishu, Somalia. The situation in Washington is a bit complicated. Mogadishu is also as complicated. As I slept last night, there are ongoing efforts to unseat the speaker of the Somali parliament and also to actually unseat the cabinet. So we have situations everywhere.

Sir, when I talk about Somalia, I always like to bring to the attention of my audience that the situation of Somalia needs to be taken into context. Somalia is a country that for 25 years or more was a failed state, and even now it is described as a fragile context. So it hovers, it oscillates between fragility and a failed state.

And the reasons Somalia is like that are many, but I would like to just mention four. I have sent to you a written statement that outlines our views about what is going on in Somalia.

But the four main reasons why we have the situation we have in Somalia is, number one, the ongoing insurgence of Al-Shabaab. The last 10 years al Qaeda-affiliated, very determined, strong, well-resourced insurgency is trying to infanticide the Somali institutions that are very fragile. And thus far, the efforts of the Somali Government, the African Union and the international community was not able to put an end to the Al-Shabaab problem.

The second reason Somalia is the way it is, is the absence of enough effort among the Somalis and the Africans and the Arab countries and the international community to also fix this failed state. It is like asking somebody to go to Mars with gadgets they get from the dollar store. The efforts Somalia gets from the investments in the last 12 years is equal to expecting somebody to go to Mars with the stuff they get from the dollar store. It has been never enough. And I can just give you one single example. The budget of the Somali Government now this year is \$270 million. The entire Somali Government budget is \$270 million. But it needs about \$3 billion to create opportunities for the Somali young citizens, about 70 percent of the population, to deal with Al-Shabaab, and to provide services. So sometimes, although everybody knows, the limited resources this government gets or is able to generate within, still we expect this government to act like a government and to provide service to its citizens.

The third problem we have in Somalia is the mediocrity, unfortunately, of our politicians. Whenever we get an opportunity to move things forward, our politicians end up unnecessarily political infightings which is going on in Mogadishu today where the MPs who just came from recess are trying to unseat the speaker and the prime minister and everybody, and that hampers the energy of the Somali people who have suffered a lot and want to fix their coun-



try. And also it actually affects the energy and the interests of the international community.

Finally, one of the biggest problems we face in Somalia is the meddling of external actors, sometimes for geopolitical reasons. Now the Gulf crisis is actually unraveling Somalia because certain different quarters with the Somali political elite are siding with one country or another, and that is actually reverberating the entire system. And this creates regression and it creates a lot of problems.

Having said that, everything is not doom and gloom in Somalia. There is a lot of ongoing efforts to the extent that the Somali think tank is coming to Washington to talk about Somalia and the government is doing its best. The citizens are doing their best.

And also, unless those four items are dealt with, especially the Somali politicians, unless they get their acts together, all the other problems will just increase.

And since I have 5 minutes, I think maybe I should just stop there, and I am happy to answer your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hashi follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT OF MR. HASHI

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member and Distinguished Senators: Thank you very much for inviting me to testify at this important and timely hearing on Somalia. Working inside and outside the Somali government has given me a unique opportunity to closely observe the challenges and opportunities in Somalia and possible ways to advance the country's elusive peace and state building agenda.

For the past 3 years, I have been the Executive Director at the Heritage Institute for Policy Studies (HIPS)—Somalia's first think tank. Prior to that, I served as Secretary to the Council of Ministers, Deputy Chief of Staff at the Prime Minister's Office, Communications Director for the Somali President and as a Cabinet Minister responsible for Public Works and Reconstruction (2010/11).

I flew in from the capital Mogadishu, where I have lived for many years, to share what Somali researchers and civil society think should be done to help our country stand on its own two feet.

#### CONTEXT IS IMPORTANT

Somalia has experienced more than a quarter of a century without functioning and effective state institutions. This is an unprecedented and unique situation and presents multifaceted and manifest challenges. Failure to appreciate the prolonged failed nature of the Somali state and its fragility could result in a misdiagnosis of challenges, a waste of resources and even an exacerbation of the current problems. There are many causes for the slow pace of progress, stagnation or at times regression of Somalia's march to recovery. However, four significant challenges represent a clear impediment to peace building and state building in this troubled Horn of Africa country.

First, one of the most organized and deadly insurgent groups—the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Al-Shabaab—has been working hard to destroy the nascent Somali institutions. Al-Shabaab has not succeeded but has blocked meaningful progress for over a decade now. Moreover and more relevant for our discussion, unless a change of strategy is quickly adopted, another Somali expert will be sitting in front of this committee five years from now talking about missed opportunities.

The second reason why Somalia is hovering between being a 'failed state' and its current designation as a 'fragile state' is the conspicuous absence of the essential resources needed to put the country back on its feet. For starters, let's consider the national budget of the federal government: about U.S. \$270 million a year, over 99 percent of which is spent paying salaries of civil servants and security personnel. At a minimum, the government would need roughly U.S. \$3 billion a year to implement its own National Development Plan. With such meager resources, the government can't deliver rudimentary services, let alone defeat Al-Shabaab or win the hearts and minds of Somalia's massive unemployed youth population, which is estimated to be 70 percent of the estimated 12 million citizens.

Landing a man on Mars with equipment sourced from a Dollar Store is more realistic than expecting Somalia to have a functioning state with its current resources, financial or otherwise. The government is trying to expand its revenue base, but it will take years to realistically levy taxes on all of its 18 administrative regions. It only controls the capital Mogadishu, and the rest is in the hands of federal member states (and Somaliland which considers itself as a separate state). The regions jealously guard their sources of revenue such as ports and airports. Somaliland has just transferred 70 percent of the Port of Berbera to UAE's Dubai World port management company and the government of Ethiopia—against the objections of the Somali government. On 12 March 2018, parliament banned Dubai World from Somalia and labeled that deal as null and void and a blatant breach on Somalia's sovereignty. This could further complicate the already frozen Somalia-Somaliland talks on unity/secession issues and may also put the fledgling Somali government and the UAE on a collision course.

Thirdly, genuine political inclusivity remains elusive. A winner takes all mentality reigns throughout the country, creating deep political instability. In a country where political and social reconciliation remain a work in progress, Somalia's elite has failed to rise to the occasion and unite against the common enemy—Al-Shabaab. Instead, they routinely spend much needed resources and energy on political infighting. They have also failed to capitalize on elections which bring fresh opportunities to create an environment conducive to stability in the form of inclusive political dispensation. Regrettably, each new leadership makes the exact same mistakes and spends the next 4 years fending off political rivals, instead of facing off against Al-Shabaab.

The fourth reason why Somalia's recovery is slow—and often goes dangerously into reverse—is the meddling of external actors with both benevolent and malevolent intentions. Interference by others has ceaselessly muddied Somalia's already troubled waters. The negative energies emanating from both state and non-state actors can be as damaging as the mischief and mediocrity of Somali politicians and the mayhem of Al-Shabaab. For instance, during elections, money from overseas and local powerbrokers is used to unseat some politicians and install others. All candidates openly dole out cash to win elections. Meanwhile, the Gulf crisis is playing out dangerously in Somalia. If the negative impact of the dispute between UAE and Qatar is not checked, it could easily destroy all the gains made thus far and will eventually strengthen Al-Shabaab's hand. Petrodollars should be used to avert starvation in Somalia—not to put this fledgling country in the middle of a geopolitical power play.

It is because of these profound challenges that it is possible to argue in one sentence—however contradictory or confusing it may sound—that that the situation in Somalia is paradoxically good, bad and ugly all at the same time.

#### REASONS FOR OPTIMISM

Having listed the litany of challenges, I want to emphasize that Somalia's situation is not only one of doom and gloom. The fact that a representative of a Somali think tank is in the Dirksen Senate Office Building speaking with distinguished U.S. Senators about Somalia is, in itself, a positive sign.

Most Somalis believe Al-Shabaab are on the wrong path and the wrong side of history and are not afraid to align themselves with their government at the national and regional levels.

Diaspora Somalis are returning to look for opportunities in their homeland and ways to contribute to the nation building efforts. Businesses are investing and creating employment opportunities however meager. Citizens are joining forces to avert famine and arrest drought induced crises. The national and regional governments are learning to work together. The federal government is strengthening key state institutions such as the capacity of the ministry of finance. International actors including the U.S. and Turkey are making an impact on the security and development fronts.

Other tangible progress includes:

- The establishment of national and regional institutions, however skeleton in nature
- International engagement and interest in Somalia
- The near completion of the federating process of the country
- Civil service salaries being paid
- The establishment of the National Security Council (between the center and regions)

## CAUSES FOR CONCERN

Despite the collective efforts of Somalis, Americans and other partners and 10 years of hard work and sacrifices, the peace building and state building objectives have not been remotely met. Security in Mogadishu is at all time low. I was a cabinet minister in 2010 when Al-Shabaab controlled 80 percent of the city and the government 20 percent, but I knew then where the enemy was. Today I don't. Despite President Farmaajo's pledge to defeat Al-Shabaab within 2 years, attacks have continued over the past year. On October 14 2017, more than 600 people were killed in a car bomb attack so grotesque that even Al-Shabaab didn't dare to claim responsibility. Just 2 weeks ago, the group attacked Balcad and Afgoye, two towns just outside the capital. Mogadishu itself has been in a semi-permanent lockdown because of supposedly explosive-laden vehicles roaming the city and the fear of complex terror attacks such as the one aimed at the presidential compound 3 weeks ago.

## AMISOM'S FUTURE

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has made tremendous sacrifices in the ongoing peace and state building efforts in Somalia and should be commended for liberating almost all urban centers from Al-Shabaab. AMISOM also provided Somalia's political elite with a security umbrella that has allowed them to get on with the task of fixing their failed state. However, it looks like AMISOM's mission in Somalia has hit an impasse. It has been on a defensive posture for the past 5 years as its bases and convoys have come under attack from Al-Shabaab, leading to loss of life and military hardware and ammunition. European donors have cancelled significant portions of the mission's funding and other partners also failed to provide much needed equipment such as helicopters. The Somali government wants AMISOM to continue with its drawdown plans (though not necessarily a full-blown withdrawal taking place all at once) so its security forces can receive donor support at a fraction of the cost of AMISOM. This is a sensible plan, because as our report (Exit Strategy Challenges for the AU Mission in Somalia) explains, only a professionally-trained Somali army can defeat Al-Shabaab.

AMISOM, on the other hand, is seeking a wider mandate including maritime capabilities, which one Somali minister described as mission creep. It also rejects the drawdown strategy. It seems AMISOM plans to coerce the U.N. Security Council to accept its demands or threaten a unilateral move if it does not get its way. The fact that both Kenya and Ethiopia (two key troop contributing countries) are having their own political problems signals potential uncertainty for the AU mission.

## WORRISOME PROSPECTS

The current strategy to stabilize Somalia is not working. A change of course is in order but unfortunately not in sight. I would even go further and state Somalia may be on a dangerous trajectory. As mentioned earlier, defeating Al-Shabaab topped the current government's mandate, and that has not happened. The group is likely to outlive yet another administration. Somalia's parliamentarians, executive and regional leaders also failed in the past year to institute political stability, which is a vital prerequisite for all the priorities this government has to deliver in its remaining 3 years. Completing the constitutional review process, establishing political parties, instituting an effective and impartial judiciary, curtailing corruption, conducting a census, collecting taxes and delivering on the promise of one-person-one-vote in 2020, all need stable politics and a safe political space.

That stability was not in evidence for much of last year. The national and regional governments were at loggerheads (though problems have tapered off). A former presidential candidate was violently attacked and his guards killed. Government forces raided a prominent lawmaker's home though it was not clear who gave the order—local actors or external powers. All this has created a toxic political environment where trust is low, suspicion is rife and more energy and resources are being poured into the contest between squabbling political camps than Somalia's myriad of problems.

The Somali parliament, the purveyors of all political storms, has just returned from recess. There are reports that some lawmakers want to shake things up by unseating top officials. The fact that the mandates of all of the five regional presidents (governors refer to themselves as presidents) are up and elections must happen does not signal stability. Both external actors and local powerbrokers may pour money into these elections, making 2018 and 2019 years that are dominated by electioneering and the negative energy and distraction from actual work that comes with it.

## CONCLUSION

Somalia's challenges are many, and it will take much time to overcome them all. There are however steps that local stakeholders and international actors can take to help Somalia move forward:

- Friends of Somalia such as the United States should understand that the Somali people have faced the most daunting tasks for the past three decades and have shown extraordinary resilience and resolve in overcoming the prolonged upheaval. As a result, they deserve to be commended and supported in a way that makes a difference. What has been happening in the last quarter of a century is equivalent to giving a painkiller to a patient that needed a heart bypass.
- More importantly, Somalia's international partners should persuade regional actors to spare Somalia from their geopolitical contests. The country is way too fragile to withstand any pressure from outsiders, particularly from rich Arab countries. If others play at proxy wars in Somalia, the net beneficiary will be Al-Shabaab.
- Finally, Somali politicians, particularly the national leadership, should not waste the next 3 years. Instead they should put in place a national strategy to stabilize the country and put it on a trajectory that leads to one-person-one-vote in 2020 and beyond. When Somalis get the politics right, they can get on with the hard work of governing.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you, Mr. Hashi. I appreciate summarizing, and we will address those questions.

Dr. Bacon.

**STATEMENT OF DR. TRICIA BACON, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR,  
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY'S SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA**

Dr. BACON. Good morning. It is an honor to be here today to discuss the security situation in Somalia. Thank you for the opportunity.

Over the past 11 years, substantial resources have been expended to counter Al-Shabaab, and as my colleague has mentioned, there has been progress. There are opportunities and there are signs of hope.

However, as I will discuss today, the current strategy will not militarily defeat Al Shabaab, and yet there is little impetus to pursue a negotiated settlement either. In this no man's land, Al-Shabaab will continue to pose a regional threat especially to Kenya and perhaps increasingly to Ethiopia as well. It will conduct terrorist attacks in Mogadishu, as well as operations against Somali and AMISOM forces. It will also act as a shadow government and challenge the legitimacy of the still fragile Somali federal government both through its violence and through presenting itself as an alternative.

The military campaign against the group is multifaceted, but I would like to focus on AMISOM, the Somali National Army and the U.S. counterterrorism efforts.

AMISOM has committed to a conditions-based withdrawal. It seems very aware that any gains will be lost if it withdraws prematurely and that the timetable for withdrawal is unwise. However, funding remains uncertain and it is that uncertainty, not the capability of the Somali National Army, that has motivated the withdrawal plans.

Even assuming that AMISOM stays with current force levels, it has little appetite for the very difficult offensive that would be required to dislodge Al-Shabaab from its stronghold. Even if AMISOM succeeded in clearing those areas, there are not the nec-

essary forces in place to hold that territory. And while AMISOM is essential to preserving the gains made to date, opposing an external occupier is a constant theme in Al-Shabaab's narrative, and this finds resonance among some Somalis.

Yet, the Somali National Army is woefully unprepared to accept responsibility. For the most part, it can hold its positions, though usually only in conjunction with AMISOM or in agreement with local forces, but it cannot expand into Al-Shabaab-held territory.

In addition, the Somali National Army continues to suffer from the ill effects of clannism. Overall, it is dominated by the Hawiye clan, leading some to see it as a glorified clan militia. Within the SNA, clan divisions persist, contributing to infighting, poor command and control, and a lack of discipline.

In contrast, Al-Shabaab has positioned itself as a champion of marginalized clans, particularly those aggrieved by the clan-based power sharing formula. While Al-Shabaab does not transcend clannism as it claims, it has sufficient internal discipline that personnel obey commands even when there are clan differences.

The Somali National Army also experiences systemic corruption. Perhaps most notably, irregular pay leads SNA soldiers to prey upon the population. It also makes SNA susceptible to infiltration by Al-Shabaab.

On the other hand, Al-Shabaab is comparatively less corrupt, particularly in its treatment of the Somali populace. The group takes a hard stance against internal corruption, punishing members who engage in such conduct.

Finally, U.S. airstrikes are putting pressure on Al-Shabaab. In 2017, the U.S. doubled its airstrikes, hitting training facilities, individuals involved in attacks, as well as other targets. However, Al-Shabaab can replace personnel with limited long-term disruption, and though strikes have thwarted some attacks, Al-Shabaab can still strike in Mogadishu.

Overall, Al-Shabaab has and will continue to incur losses from AMISOM, the SNA, and the U.S. counterterrorism efforts, but its setbacks are largely tactical. It is a resilient organization that is able to adapt to changes in the environment. And perhaps most importantly, the group has become embedded in Somali society, making a military victory difficult under the best of circumstances.

Nonetheless, there are limited prospects for a political settlement. Negotiations face serious obstacles, not least of which is how unpalatable it is to negotiate with an al Qaeda-affiliated organization that engages in terrorist attacks like the one that killed 500 in Mogadishu last October.

However, in focusing on the group's terrorist attacks, one can overlook that it has established a position as a credible alternative to the government, capitalizing on grievances, delivering a modicum of justice and security, and offering an alternative to the current political system. And despite experiencing some tensions, Al-Shabaab is probably the most cohesive and unified entity in southern Somalia.

There are few indications that Al-Shabaab seeks a political settlement. Parts of the group, particularly its leaders, are ideologically uncompromising and probably irreconcilable. But some joined the group because of political marginalization and economic exclu-

sion. And others joined quite simply just for personal profit. Should negotiations occur, Al-Shabaab would be in a powerful position. However, waiting to begin negotiations may actually give the group the ability to further improve its position.

To conclude, with limited prospects for a military victory and little motivation to enter negotiations, the conflict with Al-Shabaab has reached a stalemate. And unfortunately, if one side holds a strategic advantage in that stalemate, it may be Al-Shabaab.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Bacon follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. BACON

Good morning. It is an honor to be here this morning to discuss Somalia's current stability and security status, in particular the state of efforts against al-Shabaab. Thank you for the opportunity.

Over the past eleven years, substantial resources have been expended in the effort to defeat al-Shabaab. Most notably, the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) deployed in 2007 to protect the fledgling Transitional Federal Government from the rising threat from al-Shabaab. Multiple countries, including the United States, have invested significant aid to build a Somali government that is capable of governing its people, investing heavily in the Somali National Army, police, and other parts of the security sector. In addition to training, advising, and even conducting joint operations, the United States has conducted an air campaign, launching strikes like the one that killed al-Shabaab's leader in 2014. The airstrikes have expanded and accelerated over the past year, striking al-Shabaab's training facilities, elements of the group involved in attacking the capital, and other targets.

There has been progress and signs of hope. AMISOM helped to regain substantial territory from al-Shabaab. The group has lost personnel, both because of counterterrorism operations and defections. Elections have been held in Somalia, with a peaceful transition of power last year.

However, at a strategic level, the campaign against al-Shabaab is at a stalemate. As I will discuss today, the current strategy will not militarily defeat al-Shabaab or even seriously degrade the group. Yet, there is little momentum to pursue a negotiated political settlement either. In the current no-man's land situation, al-Shabaab will continue to pose a regional threat, especially to Kenya and perhaps increasingly to Ethiopia. It will retain the ability to conduct devastating terrorist attacks in Mogadishu as well as operations against Somali and AMISOM forces. It will act as a shadow government, governing large swaths of rural Somalia overtly while indirectly ruling parts of Somalia seemingly under government and AMISOM control. It will continue to challenge the legitimacy of the still-fragile Somali Federal Government, both through its violence and through presenting itself as an alternative to the government.

THE PROSPECTS FOR A MILITARY VICTORY AGAINST AL-SHABAAB

Unfortunately, the prospects to defeat al-Shabaab militarily are bleak. The military campaign against the group consists of multiple components: AMISOM, U.S. counterterrorism strikes, training and advising the Somali National Army, and joint operations, just to name a few. I will focus here on the impact of AMISOM, the Somali National Army, and U.S. counterterrorism strikes.

Given the security situation in Somalia, it is easy to overlook AMISOM's accomplishments: re-capturing territory, including major cities, from al-Shabaab; preventing al-Shabaab from gaining control of Mogadishu; and helping to secure the country sufficiently for elections and a relatively peaceful transition of power last year. AMISOM has an enormous, perhaps impossible, mission with thirteen major components in its mandate. It has three current strategic objectives, based on U.N. Security Council Resolution 2372: to gradually handover security responsibility to Somali Security Forces; to reduce the threat posed by al-Shabaab and other armed opposition groups; and to assist Somali Security Forces to provide security for Somalia's political process and peacebuilding efforts.

There is still some uncertainty about the future of AMISOM. It has committed to a conditions-based withdrawal. Recent statements indicate that AMISOM is fully aware that its gains will be lost if it withdraws prematurely and that a timetable for its withdrawal is not a sound approach. To be clear: an AMISOM withdrawal will almost certainly allow al-Shabaab to re-gain substantial territory and influence

and may even lead to the collapse of the Somali Federal Government. However, the funding for AMISOM remains uncertain, and it is that uncertainty, not the stability of the situation in Somalia and capability of the Somali National Army, which has motivated the withdrawal plans.

Even assuming that AMISOM stays with the current force levels, it has a limited offensive orientation and no appetite for the difficult offensive campaign that would be needed to dislodge al-Shabaab from its stronghold in the rural areas of Somalia. In addition, AMISOM's gains have often proven unsustainable. When AMISOM moves out of places that it has cleared, al-Shabaab quickly returns or re-emerges from the population.

In the meantime, al-Shabaab inflicts losses on AMISOM. Perhaps most notably, the group has overrun Forward Operating Bases, killing and injuring scores of troops and seizing arms, military vehicles, and heavy weaponry. More recently, it has become adept at ambushing AMISOM convoys, including a recent attack on Burundian soldiers escorting a convoy of trucks loaded with supplies, which reportedly killed five.

While AMISOM is essential to preserving the gains made to date, opposing "external occupiers" and condemning the Somali government as a puppet of foreign powers are constant themes in al-Shabaab's narrative. And this message resonates among some Somalis who resent AMISOM's presence, particularly the Ethiopian and Kenyan troops. Accusations of misconduct by AMISOM troops have contributed to some local opposition to their presence.

Yet, the Somali National Army is woefully unprepared to accept responsibility from AMISOM. For the most part, the Somali National Army is adequate to the task of holding its positions, but can only do so in conjunction with AMISOM or with the agreement of local forces. But it cannot move beyond its current positions, and for both military and political reasons, it cannot expand into al-Shabaab-held territory.

In addition, the Somali National Army continues to suffer the ill effects of clannism. Overall, it is dominated by the Hawiye clan, leading others to see it as essentially a clan militia. Within the SNA, clan divisions persist, contributing to infighting, poor command and control, and a lack of discipline. Loyalty and obedience are often determined more by clan affiliation than position and rank. Particularly since the collapse of the state, individuals depend upon their clans for support and protection. The task of supplanting this to realign with the state as national soldiers is a long-term and fraught endeavor.

In contrast, al-Shabaab has positioned itself as a champion of disenfranchised clans, particularly those insufficiently represented in the clan-based power sharing formula. While al-Shabaab does not transcend clan, as it claims, it has sufficient internal discipline that personnel obey commands even in the face of clan differences.

The Somali National Army also experiences endemic corruption. While corruption is not unique to the Somali National Army, the SNA's corruption and misconduct in particular benefit al-Shabaab. It is difficult to provide numbers of SNA personnel because troop numbers have often been inflated with "ghost soldiers" in order to secure more funding from international donors.

In particular, irregular pay, in part because of corruption at more senior levels, has damaging consequences. It contributes to a lack of discipline and leads SNA soldiers to prey upon the population.

Moreover, there is a lack of accountability and redress when civilians lodge complaints against SNA personnel. Of the 228 complaints filed against the Ministry of Defense with the Somali anti-corruption NGO Marqaati, 97% concerned soldiers robbing people at gunpoint. Soldiers sometimes sell their weapons, equipment, or even uniforms, which can end up in al-Shabaab's hands and contribute to the SNA's equipment and supply shortfalls. Irregular pay also makes the SNA more susceptible to infiltration by al-Shabaab, which is already a significant problem. Some SNA personnel have reportedly even defected to al-Shabaab after prolonged periods without pay.

On the other hand, al-Shabaab is comparatively less corrupt, particularly in its treatment of the Somali populace. Traveling on roads that it controls involves paying a one-time "tax" that comes with a receipt, rather than paying at multiple checkpoints or being robbed on other roads, including those controlled by SNA soldiers. Al-Shabaab has a system for people to lodge complaints against its members for misconduct. The group takes a hard stance against internal corruption, severely punishing members who engage in such conduct.

Finally, U.S. airstrikes and joint operations are putting pressure on al-Shabaab and causing some internal disruptions within the group. In 2017, the United States conducted twice as many airstrikes against al-Shabaab as it did in 2016. Last

March the campaign expanded beyond self-defense to include offensive strikes with greater flexibility to target the group and to support AMISOM and Somali forces.

The strikes are succeeding in forcing al-Shabaab commanders to focus more on personal security at the expense of other activities. They have to be more cautious about their movements and communications, which hampers coordination. Their leaders, particularly high-value targets, are less accessible to their followers. When members have to dedicate resources to their own security, it reduces their ability to effectively engage in operational planning. The airstrikes also stoke fears of spies and infiltrators, which can lead to witch hunts that damage group cohesion and alienate the local population. In addition, the airstrikes have disrupted some planned attacks on Mogadishu and eliminated individuals involved in those operations.

However, after more than a decade and having endured numerous losses, including of its founding leader, al-Shabaab has developed a deep bench—which means it can replace commanders, and even leaders, with limited long-term disruption. Though the strikes have thwarted some attacks and damaged the group's planning, al-Shabaab retains robust operational capacity, including in Mogadishu. Moreover, al-Shabaab has sought to persuade Somalis, with some success, that the airstrikes disproportionately harm civilians.

Overall, al-Shabaab has and will continue to incur losses from AMISOM, the Somali National Army, and U.S. CT strikes. The United States' provision of an unmanned aerial intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) system to AMISOM will help AMISOM to avoid or pre-empt some al-Shabaab ambushes. But al-Shabaab's setbacks have been and will remain largely tactical. It is a mature and resilient organization with a proven track record of adapting its tactics to changes in the environment. Perhaps more importantly, the group is embedded in Somali society, making a military victory difficult in the best of circumstances, but highly unlikely in the current situation.

#### THE PROSPECTS FOR A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT

Despite the absence of a viable route to militarily defeating al-Shabaab, there are also limited prospects for a political settlement. Without question, any negotiations with al-Shabaab face serious obstacles, not least of which is how unpalatable it is to negotiate with an al-Qaida-affiliated organization that engages in terrorist attacks like the one that killed 500 in Mogadishu in October. However, in focusing on the group's terrorist attacks, one can overlook that the group has established a position as a credible alternative to the government, effectively capitalizing on grievances, delivering a modicum of justice and security, and offering an alternative to the clanism and reliance on external actors that defines the current political system. Despite experiencing some tensions, al-Shabaab is probably the most cohesive and unified entity in southern Somalia. But ultimately, al-Shabaab's main strength is the weakness of its main adversary: the Somali Federal Government.

To be clear at the outset: there are few indications that al-Shabaab as an organization seeks negotiations to find a political settlement. Some argue that the group, or at least elements of it, are irreconcilable. That is probably true, though it is impossible to definitively know this until negotiations are seriously attempted. There are parts of the group, particularly its leaders, who are ideologically hardline and committed to al-Qaida, and thus probably irreconcilable. But a substantial number of al-Shabaab members joined because of grievances about political marginalization and economic exclusion in the current system. Some even joined for personal profit. This segment of al-Shabaab likely has the potential to reconcile and reintegrate. However, given al-Shabaab's strength, the hopes that al-Shabaab can be significantly weakened through defections are unwarranted.

Perhaps equally problematic, al-Shabaab still enjoys a position of relative strength compared to the government, which gives it little incentive to enter into negotiations. It can readily endure the military pressure it faces. And with the prospect of an AMISOM withdrawal looming, the group may believe that all it needs to do is wait to improve its position further. Even if it did enter negotiations, it is in a sufficiently strong position that the government would be hard pressed to offer it more than it already has.

Another risk of negotiations is that they could damage the credibility of the still fragile Somali Federal Government. Despite some progress, the government is far from secure. Al-Shabaab has reportedly infiltrated many of the major Somali Federal Government institutions. And some government officials have made unrealistic promises about the prospects to militarily defeat al-Shabaab and build a Somali National Army, promises that would be exposed as such if the government pursues negotiations. In addition, negotiations with al-Shabaab may also face resistance from important international donors, not least of all, the United States.



In contrast, al-Shabaab has garnered legitimacy as an alternative to the government. It has a relatively well run administration, which flies in the face of claims that Somalia is ungovernable. The main services it provides are relative security in the territory it controls and justice for those who use its court system. As long as the population adheres to its edicts, they enjoy a modicum of security. Its courts are perceived as fair, efficient, and uncorrupt, which leads even some who do not live under al-Shabaab courts to seek them out to resolve disputes. Equally important, people adhere to al-Shabaab's court rulings, if for no other reason than the group's ability to inflict punishment on those who try to defy it.

Al-Shabaab also runs an extensive taxation system that enjoys near universal compliance, for largely the same reason. Though it has sometimes overreached in what it tries to extract from the population, for the most part, the group efficiently collects "taxes," even from businesses in Mogadishu, a feat that the government has not matched. Many licit and illicit businesses alike cooperate with al-Shabaab, because where al-Shabaab's writ extends, its licenses, rulings, and receipts are honored. In addition to offering a robust source of income, taxation is yet another way that al-Shabaab makes its presence felt throughout Somali society.

Al-Shabaab's combination of legitimacy and coercive power have produced results unparalleled in southern Somalia since the collapse of the state. Should negotiations occur, al-Shabaab would be in a powerful negotiating position. Rather than postponing negotiations until al-Shabaab is weakened, waiting to begin negotiations may actually give the group the ability to improve its position.

#### CONCLUSION

To conclude, if one measures the state of the effort against al-Shabaab by the territory it controls compared to its peak or the number of al-Shabaab fighters or high value targets who have been killed, the assessment may not appear as grim. But these metrics do not capture the far more complex conflict underway between a fragile government seen by some as propped up by external actors and a jihadist insurgency that has succeeded in embedding itself in society. The group has been declared on its back foot or on the verge of defeat many times. It is simply not the case.

With limited prospects for a military victory and little motivation on either side to enter the difficult negotiations that would be needed to find a political settlement, the conflict with al-Shabaab has reached a stalemate. Both sides will achieve tactical victories and experience tactical defeats. If one side holds a strategic advantage in the stalemate, it is al-Shabaab. While time and resources do give the Somali Federal Government a chance to improve governance, the political will among donor countries or AMISOM may wane over time, absent significant progress or simply because of other crises demanding resources. For the time being, the conflict is in a holding pattern, one that is costly in terms of lives and resources. And one that is unlikely to end with al-Shabaab's defeat.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you, Dr. Bacon.  
Mr. Yarnell.

#### **STATEMENT OF MARK YARNELL, UN LIAISON AND SENIOR ADVOCATE, REFUGEES INTERNATIONAL, WASHINGTON, DC**

Mr. YARNELL. Thank you, Chairman Flake, Ranking Member Booker, Senator Merkley, members of the subcommittee. It is an honor to be here, and I ask that my full statement be submitted for the record.

In 2017, funds authorized by you, Members of Congress, helped stave off a major famine in Somalia. But the crisis is far from over. Severe drought and insecurity continue, and we now face the very old threat, Senator Flake, as you said, of backsliding.

In my testimony, I will first explain the positive impact of last year's response. I will then highlight three urgent issues: the ongoing humanitarian needs, the lack of safety and security for displaced Somalis, and the uncertainty facing Somali refugees in Kenya. I will also address longer-term development objectives and the critical role of sustained U.S. leadership.

At this time last year, the deadly combination of drought and violent conflict brought Somalia to the edge of catastrophe, one that could have rivaled the 2011 famine that killed 260,000 people.

I was in Somalia during the height of the crisis last year as hundreds of thousands were fleeing their homes in search of food and water. In one town, where people had been streaming in from the surrounding rural areas, I met Somalis who had lost everything. One woman, Halima, had arrived with her seven children. The drought had killed most of her animals and Al-Shabaab had taken the rest. Now she was simply desperate for food to feed her children. Her story was all too common, and the prognosis looked bleak.

Fortunately, when USAID's famine early warning systems network sounded the alarm, the United States and other donors responded with significant resources. According to UNICEF, nearly 1 million Somalis accessed emergency nutrition services. Agencies like the World Food Program increased the implementation of cash assistance allowing the people to buy the food items they needed while also helping to stabilize the markets.

However, though a worst-case scenario was, indeed, avoided, the drought persists and insecurity continues. There are currently around 2.1 million Somalis displaced within their own country, and if the next long rains fail, this could result in a poor harvest for the fifth consecutive season.

At present, more than half the people in need in Somalia are children. We know that targeted, well-resourced feeding programs can work. We cannot allow thousands of children to die simply because of a lack of funding. Based on the current needs, the U.S. Government and other donors should at least match the humanitarian funding that was provided last year.

As well as treating hunger and malnutrition, more assistance is also needed to protect the rights and safety of displaced Somalis. Tragically, rape and sexual assault is pervasive, including at the hands of security forces. As well, uncertain land tenure means that people living in displacement camps face the constant threat of forceful evictions, especially those from weaker clans and minority ethnic groups.

Across the border in Kenya, the government has suspended refugee registration for arrivals from Somalia and periodically threatens to close the Dadaab refugee camp which houses more than 230,000 Somali refugees.

The decision by the Trump administration to effectively scuttle the option of resettlement to the United States has dealt another blow. This is deeply disturbing. Resettlement is an essential form of protection for refugees who face particular threats and vulnerabilities. And it also offers hope for the future. For many, this hope is now gone.

Ultimately, emergency response efforts for Somalia can only go so far, especially in the face of worsening climate trends. A key component for a longer-term strategy for Somalia is dual-pronged: support resilience programs that aim to help people bounce back from climate shocks while also adapting assistance for urban-displaced who have lost their livelihoods and are unlikely to return to their home areas.

Fortunately, despite the challenges, the United States does have, I believe, a willing partner in the Somali Government, but to ensure that engagement with Somalia is as effective as possible, indeed the post of U.S. Ambassador to Somalia must be filled without delay.

Last year, in the face of crisis, you here in Congress passed a supplemental appropriations bill that saved lives and prevented a disaster. Now that same leadership is needed to sustain those gains and to support Somalis as they build a better future.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Yarnell follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MR. YARNELL

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Chairman Flake, Ranking Member Booker, and the members of this subcommittee for holding this timely hearing today.

Refugees International (RI) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that advocates for lifesaving assistance and protection for displaced people in parts of the world impacted by conflict, persecution, and forced displacement. Based in Washington, we conduct fact-finding missions to research and report on the circumstances of displaced populations in countries such as Somalia, Iraq, Nigeria, and Bangladesh. RI does not accept any government or United Nations funding, which helps ensure that our advocacy is impartial and independent.

I have traveled to Somalia and the wider Horn of Africa region every year for the past six years, and Refugees International has been reporting on the situation for displaced Somalis since 2008.

You are holding this hearing at a crucial moment for Somalia. Last year, famine was averted—but the crisis is far from over. In February 2017, after successive failed rainy seasons, the Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWSNET)—the early warning and analysis institution created by USAID in 1985—rang the alarm bell. The deadly combination of drought, violent conflict, and restricted humanitarian access could have led to a catastrophe as severe as the 2011 Somali famine that killed 260,000.

Fortunately, unlike in 2011, the early warning system worked. Donor governments, especially the United States, responded promptly with robust humanitarian funding. Aid organizations were able to expand their operations and target populations in greatest need—thus avoiding a worst case scenario.

However, though famine was averted, the humanitarian needs in Somalia remain significant, and strong donor funding through 2018 is essential to save lives and prevent backsliding from the fragile gains that were made last year. Drought and conflict have continued into 2018, further eroding the coping capacity of Somali households and contributing to new displacement. At present, 5.4 million people are in need of emergency assistance throughout the country, including more than 300,000 children who are at risk of starvation.

More than 2 million Somalis are displaced internally, as well as hundreds of thousands living as refugees in neighboring countries. In addition to providing life-saving services like food and healthcare, the United States must support programs that protect the rights and well-being of displaced Somalis who suffer from pervasive gender-based violence (GBV) and face the regular threat of eviction their camps, especially in the Somali capital, Mogadishu.

Across the border in Kenya, where the government has at times threatened to close down the Dadaab refugee camp, currently housing more than 230,000 Somali refugees, news that the U.S. resettlement program has effectively been shuttered—by so-called extreme vetting and other administrative and bureaucratic hurdles—has been devastating to refugees who face exceptional vulnerabilities. Congress must press the Trump Administration to maintain the longstanding U.S. commitment to resettle refugees in need.

Ultimately, U.S. assistance to the region will need to go beyond near-term humanitarian concerns if we are to address the chronic nature of the crisis in Somalia. This includes expanding programs that support the resilience of Somalis to rebound from recurrent drought, as well as programs that are adapted to the rapid urbanization of the country.

My testimony today will detail last year's emergency response to prevent famine, the ongoing humanitarian needs, protection gaps in the response, and concerns for

refugees in Kenya. I will provide both immediate and long-term policy recommendations to better address the needs of Somalis.

#### FAMINE AVERTED

I traveled to Somalia in July of last year, during the height of the crisis. By then 800,000 people had been displaced because of the drought. Most fled from rural areas, often under the control of Al-Shabaab, to urban centers secured by the Somali government and African Union peacekeeping forces. In these areas accessible to aid agencies, there was at least the chance that people who had lost everything could receive life-saving assistance.

When I visited the town of Baidoa in south central Somalia, humanitarian agencies were struggling to keep up with the pace of new arrivals. At the time, the town had received nearly 170,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) from the surrounding rural areas—most arriving by foot after days of travel. I met a single mother named Halima who had recently arrived with her seven children. She was from a small village about 20 miles northwest of Baidoa, where she had a small farm as well as camels, cows, and goats. Tragically, as she described, “There was not enough water or (food) for the animals and many died. Then Al-Shabaab took some of them . . . to eat. I had only one donkey left. When he died, I came here.” Her story is all too common.

Halima and other displaced people were living in informal settlements in small, makeshift shelters built with cloth and sticks. At the sites I visited, the shelters were only a few feet apart and most lacked adequate access to clean water and sanitation facilities. Shortly before we arrived, a cholera epidemic had swept through a number of IDP sites, killing hundreds.

My colleagues and I were extremely concerned. Throughout the country, malnutrition rates were rising, and among IDPs in Baidoa, the rate of severe acute malnutrition had tripled. The threat of famine was real.

Fortunately, donors stepped up, and aid agencies rapidly expanded their programs. In FY 2017, the United States alone provided more than \$422 million in emergency funding through USAID’s Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance and Office of Food for Peace, as well as the State Department’s Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration. Importantly, the famine warning by FEWSNET—also funded by the United States—helped rally others to quickly respond. The system worked. By the end of last year, the U.N.’s request for \$1.5 billion was more than 70 percent funded. Members of the Senate and House deserve particular credit for responding to the urgent needs by adding \$990 million in supplemental famine prevention and response in four countries, including Somalia, in May of last year.

The robust funding allowed aid workers to reach more people in need, with a particular focus on treating those who were on the edge of starvation. According to UNICEF, nearly one million Somalis accessed nutrition services in 2017, many of them young children suffering from severe malnutrition. Through the end of last year, the overall rate of Somalis suffering from hunger and malnutrition has slightly, though steadily declined. Specifically, the median rate of global acute malnutrition across the country dropped from 17.4 percent in July to 13.8 percent in December.

Additionally, U.N. agencies and NGOs significantly increased the implementation of cash assistance programs. Despite the crisis, market systems in Somalia have continued to function. Cash assistance has allowed IDPs to buy the food items they needed while helping to stabilize the markets. The United Nations cites the expansion of cash assistance as a key factor in preventing famine.

Finally, a coordination group led by the International Organization for Migration and the U.N. Refugee Agency (UNHCR) conducted detailed IDP site assessments to determine which agency was providing which services and where, with the objective of ensuring that the funding provided to humanitarian agencies was implemented as effectively as possible. This has contributed to an improvement in the basic conditions in some IDP camps, in particular for shelter, as well as for water and sanitation services.

#### DROUGHT AND CONFLICT PERSIST

Though the worst was avoided, this is no time to take the foot off the gas pedal. Unfortunately, the drought persists and insecurity continues. There are currently 2.1 million Somalis displaced internally—more than double the number from 2016—and 5.4 million are in need of food assistance. The next long rains, from April to June, are forecast to be below average, which could lead to a poor harvest for the fifth consecutive season. Even if favorable rains do come, crops and livestock have

been depleted to such a degree that it will require multiple successive strong rainy seasons for pastoralist and agriculturalist communities to recover livelihood assets.

Additionally, while the Somali government, with the support of African Union peacekeepers, has expanded its area of territorial control over the past few years, the conflict with Al-Shabaab continues to force people from their homes on a regular basis. When I was in Mogadishu in July 2017, I met with a woman named Badra and her five children—one less than a year old—who had fled to an IDP camp only a few days prior. The lack of rain had already wiped out some of her livelihood assets when Al-Shabaab attacked her village in the district of Merka, just south of Mogadishu, in an attempt to reclaim it from government control. “First we had a terrible drought and a lot of our livestock died. Then fighting broke out, and these guys took what we had left. I used to have camels, cows, and goats. Now, nothing is left,” she said.

When she and her children arrived in Mogadishu, they settled on a small plot of land with other IDPs. After several days, they had not yet received any aid, so they were dependent on the generosity of others in the camp to share their food. Though the overall situation in Somalia has improved since I met Badra and her children last July, the combination of drought and conflict continues to force tens of thousands of Somalis from their homes on a monthly basis.

Through 2018, the United Nations estimates that \$1.5 billion will be needed for the humanitarian response in Somalia. Just before he departed for Africa last week, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson announced an additional \$110 million in humanitarian funding for Somalia from the United States. This is welcome and badly needed, but it is not enough to meet urgent needs this year. Aid organizations that expanded their operations during the worst of the crisis need assurances that they can maintain robust programming while the crisis continues. The gains from last year are fragile.

At present, more than half the people in need in Somalia are children, including more than 300,000 who face acute malnutrition. We know that targeted, well-resourced feeding programs can work. We cannot allow thousands of children to die simply because of a lack of funding.

Recently, a senior aid worker in Somalia told me that, last month, his organization had to close 15 mobile nutrition units, serving 84 communities, due to lack of funding. And they may end other health programs if they do not receive additional money soon.

*This year, in addition to the new funding that Secretary Tillerson announced, the United States must at least match the nearly \$423 million that it provided in FY2017 with an additional contribution of at least \$313 million. In particular, support for nutrition and health programming, as well as cash assistance for food, is essential.*

#### PROTECTING THE RIGHTS AND SAFETY OF DISPLACED SOMALIS

In a troubling trend, as the numbers of drought-displaced Somalis increased, so did the incidents of rape and other forms of gender-based violence (GBV). In June of last year, as the IDP caseload ballooned, UNICEF and its partners responded to nearly a thousand cases of rape—a three-fold increase compared to previous months. When I visited Baidoa last year, GBV specialists told us that intimate partner violence among IDPs was a serious concern but also that perpetrators from the outside—including members of security forces—come and go from IDP sites with ease. As noted above, detailed site assessments have helped improve the overall conditions in camps, but to address sexual violence and other forms of GBV, efforts to reduce overcrowding in IDP camps as well as to install solar-panel lighting and sex-disaggregated latrines with locks must be expanded. There is also urgent need for more healthcare and psychosocial support for victims. This all requires donor support.

IDPs also face the regular threat of being forcibly evicted from camps. As the value of land has increased in urban areas—particularly in Mogadishu—landowners, including government officials, often seek to reclaim their land for private development. With advance notice, the identification of alternative site locations, in consultation with IDPs and the aid organizations that serve them, relocations can be carried out appropriately and in a way that does not cause additional harm. To that end, in 2014, the Somali government adopted a policy that set out guidelines for lawful evictions.

Unfortunately, however, the policy is rarely followed. The Norwegian Refugee Council reported that in 2017, more than 153,000 IDPs were forcibly evicted in Mogadishu alone. In one particularly devastating incident on December 29, some 29,000 IDPs residing at a cluster of sites on the outskirts of Mogadishu were sent

fleeing when a bulldozer and armed men showed up and demolished shelters as well as emergency schools, water points, and a feeding center. In the immediate term, Somali authorities must hold the perpetrators accountable. Going forward, protection actors, such as the U.N. Refugee Agency, must develop deeper community linkages with IDPs and landowners to establish an early warning system for evictions. Upon notice of evictions, U.N. officials must directly engage Somali authorities to prevent unlawful actions from going forward.

Already marginalized groups in Somali society are particularly prone to this and other risks. We know that during the 2011 famine, most of those who died were from traditionally weaker clans and minority ethnic groups, including the Rahanweyn clan and Somali Bantus. Those from more dominant clans often controlled aid distribution flows into IDP camps, diverting portions of aid from those at the lower end of the social hierarchy—a practice that was pervasive. To address this during the current crisis, some relief agencies have trained staff to map the power dynamics within IDP sites and enhance post-distribution monitoring. This is currently happening on a relatively small scale and should be expanded to ensure that assistance is delivered to those for whom it is intended.

*Strong financial contributions from the United States must prioritize support for monitoring, preventing, and responding to protection challenges.*

#### REFUGEES IN KENYA

In addition to those displaced internally within Somalia, many Somalis have sought refuge in neighboring countries, including more than 290,000 in Kenya, most of whom reside at the Dadaab refugee camp in the northeast region of the country. While Kenya has been a generous host to refugees from throughout the region for decades, the government has made calls for the closure of the camp and for all Somalis to return home. Most recently, they called for Dadaab to be shuttered by May 2017, but the policy was ruled unconstitutional by Kenya's High Court. Despite the ruling, the government is effectively achieving its plan to reduce the numbers in Dadaab by refusing to register new arrivals and by urging Somalis to sign-up for a facilitated returns program.

The lack of ongoing refugee registration is significant, especially while the conditions inside Somalia remain perilous. Without registration, asylum seekers who arrive in Kenya are not able to receive life-saving assistance such as food and shelter. Additionally, without legal status, they are subject to arrest and deportation. Through 2017, a Kenyan aid organization monitoring the border between the two countries counted about 24,000 Somalis crossing into Kenya, with most citing drought and insecurity as motivating factors. In addition, the United Nations has profiled around 7,000 unregistered Somalis in Dadaab. Though the numbers are relatively small, the policy is harmful. The Kenyan government is essentially sending a message north of the border that, even when Somalis are fleeing for their lives, they will not receive assistance and protection in Kenya.

Life in Dadaab is by no means easy. The sprawling camp complex is located in a remote, arid region of Kenya. And the World Food Program regularly cuts food rations due to a lack of funding, most recently in October 2017. Nonetheless, as described above, the conditions inside Somalia are in no way conducive to large-scale returns. Short of alternative options, the camp offers Somalis a place of refuge until conditions back home improve.

As a result of this combination of factors, morale among the refugee population in Dadaab is very low. Many feel pressure to leave Kenya while they fear for their ability to survive if they return to Somalia too soon. The decision by the Trump Administration to effectively scuttle the option of resettlement to the United States has dealt another blow. In 2016, the United States resettled nearly 10,000 refugees from Somalia. In contrast, over the past 5 months, with new U.S. vetting and bureaucratic measures in place, only 177 Somalis have been resettled to the United States, with no expectation that numbers will increase substantially. This is deeply disturbing, as resettlement is an essential form of protection for refugees who face particular threats and vulnerabilities.

*It is imperative for Congress to urge the Trump Administration to maintain the longstanding U.S. commitment to resettle refugees. Additionally, the United States must sustain financial support for refugee assistance operations in Dadaab, while calling on the Kenyan government to resume refugee registration for arrivals from Somalia and to ensure that any returns to Somalia are safe, dignified, and voluntary.*

## STRATEGY FOR DISPLACEMENT OVER THE LONG-TERM

Short-term, emergency response efforts, whether for those internally displaced in Somalia or for refugees in neighboring countries like Kenya, can only go so far. A key component for a longer-term strategy for Somalia is dual-pronged: Address the conditions of need that cause displacement in the first place, but also adapt programming for urbanized IDPs who have already lost their livelihood assets and are unlikely to return to rural areas.

To its credit, U.S. government support to Somalia over the past several years has included support for programs to build the resilience of vulnerable households to climate stress and other shocks. Innovative resilience programs, supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development, have proven effective in improving food security and allowing communities to better weather poor harvests. The United States has proven to be a thought leader in resilience efforts and must sustain investment in its program. *Specifically, the United States must continue to support resilience programs that bridge the gap between short-term responses and long-term needs, including those aimed at restoring and improving productive capacities through improved agricultural inputs and rehabilitation of agricultural productive infrastructure.*

Unfortunately, for those who are not able to weather recurrent shocks, the ongoing crisis has resulted in massive displacement to urban areas, while climate change and other structural economic causes have contributed to urbanization in general. Mogadishu is now one of the fastest growing cities in the world. Many of the IDPs in Mogadishu and other cities with whom I have met over the past five years have said they expect that they will never to return to their pastoralist or agriculturalist livelihoods because all of their assets have been completely wiped out. Others told me that they had lost so many family members during periods of insecurity that they had nothing to return to.

*Given this reality, the U.S. assistance to Somalia will increasingly need to focus on urban development and promoting the local inclusion of IDPs in cities.* We urge the United States to support initiatives to engage local governments to extend access to urban services and to integrate IDPs who are unlikely to return their home areas. This support should also include assistance for education and new skills development among IDPs as Somalia transforms into an urbanized society.

Fortunately, the United States and other donors appear to have a willing partner in the Somali government in achieving these development objectives. Somalia's current National Development Plan prioritizes climate adaptation strategies, and political leaders, at both the national and local level, have made positive statements regarding the integration of IDPs in urban areas.

## CONCLUSION

Now is not the time to scale back on our commitment to Somalia. Though famine was averted last year, serious needs remain and the risk of backsliding is real. In addition, humanitarian assistance must be matched by sustained engagement with the Somali government in support of peace and stability. Indeed, when Secretary Tillerson announced new humanitarian funding for Somalia, he noted that money will not solve Somalia's challenges, "but only buy us time—time to pursue diplomatic solutions." *To that end, Congress must urge the President to nominate a U.S. ambassador to Somalia.* This would demonstrate not only an intention to promote a coherent U.S. approach toward Somalia, but it would also demonstrate U.S. commitment to the Somali people.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONGRESS

- Provide at least an additional \$313 million in humanitarian funding in FY2018 to respond to emergency needs in Somalia and to protect the rights and safety of displaced populations.
  - Funding priorities should include nutrition, health, and cash assistance, as well programs that seek to both prevent and respond to gender-based violence.
  - Programs aimed at monitoring, preventing, and responding to regular forced evictions of internally displaced people (IDPs) from their camps should also be supported.
- Sustain financial support for the refugee assistance operations in Dadaab, currently housing more than 230,000 Somali refugees. Additionally, call on the Kenyan government to resume refugee registration for arrivals from Somalia and to ensure that any returns to Somalia are safe, dignified, and voluntary.

- Urge the Trump Administration to maintain the longstanding U.S. commitment to resettle refugees in need, including Somalis.
- Support a long-term assistance strategy in Somalia that includes:
  - Continued programing aimed at building household and community resilience to drought;
  - Urban development and planning that extends access to affordable housing, land, services, and jobs for IDPs who may never return to their rural home areas.
- Call on President Trump to nominate an ambassador to Somalia

Senator FLAKE. Thank you.

Dr. Hogendoorn.

**STATEMENT OF DR. E.J. HOGENDOORN, DEPUTY PROGRAM DIRECTOR, AFRICA, INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP, WASHINGTON, DC**

Dr. HOGENDOORN. Thank you, Senators Flake, Booker, and Merkley, for inviting Crisis Group to testify today.

We last testified on Somalia in 2013, and sadly there has been too little progress so far.

Today in my testimony, I would like to stress three points for your consideration.

First, there is no military solution to the conflict in Somalia. U.S. drone strikes and special forces operations cannot defeat Al-Shabaab, and 22,000 African Union forces cannot control or pacify an area the size of New Mexico. That is because Al-Shabaab is a resilient foe. It has shifted from conventional to asymmetric warfare. It is now engaging in ambushes, suicide bombings, and assassinations to continue to undermine attempts to rebuild the state in the country. It also exploits clan grievances and popular disgust with the government's corruption, nepotism, and impunity of their officials to exert control over large amounts of the rural population in south and central Somalia.

To defeat Al-Shabaab, we need two things. We need effective local security partners, and while there had been some improvements, it has not been enough. The Somali National Army in particular is poorly coordinated, is mistrusted by a number of important clans, and there is massive corruption that undermines morale and the ability to operate. In fact, on 14 December, the United States suspended its support to most of Somalia's national army because of corruption concerns. Small and specialized units such as the NOB are not enough to take on Al-Shabaab.

Secondly, we need to generate Somali political will for security sector reform. Unfortunately, what we have right now is we have perverse incentives pervading in Mogadishu. Because AMISOM is protecting the government from Al-Shabaab, many politicians prefer the status quo, which is a continuation of massive corruption and unwillingness to address the political dysfunctions that are driving people to support Al-Shabaab or to expend the political capital that would be necessary for significant security sector reform. We need to change those incentives, and as part of that, what has been discussed is an exit strategy for AMISOM, the idea being that we slowly hand security responsibilities over to our Somali partners. In an effort to do that, the U.N. Security Council also passed resolution 2372 late last year in an effort to set up a timeline for



this passing of responsibility from AMISOM to the Somalis, and we think that that should be pursued.

A second issue that I would like to raise—it has been raised by some of my colleagues—is poor governance and corruption. Unfortunately, Somalia is still governed by a 2012 provisional constitution, which vaguely defines the division of responsibilities and authorities both at the executive and between federal member states. This is the cause of much disfunctioning, chronic infighting between the president, the prime minister, and parliament, as Abdirashid has referred to, and it has also led to significant tensions between Mogadishu and regional capitals as to how to pursue the effort against Al-Shabaab.

Another disturbing aspect is a decision by the Somali federal government to pursue what in Somali is called “hard government.” The government has actually taken some fairly authoritarian steps particularly against opposition leaders, most notably in a December raid against an opposition leader in which five of his body guards were killed. This is costing the government significant popular support.

In addition, abrasive rhetoric by politicians in Mogadishu has exacerbated tensions between certain federal states. It has also exacerbated tensions between the self-declared independent Somaliland and the federal member state of Puntland.

And last but not least, Somalia still has not tackled the massive problem of corruption. It should not be a surprise to anyone here that Somalia is, unfortunately, ranked the most corrupt country in the world, according to Transparency International.

Last but not least—Abdirashid mentioned this as well, but I think it is important to stress—there are significant external destabilizing influences, particularly at the moment when it comes to the rivalry between the Gulf state actors in Somalia. This is especially true for the rivalry between the United Arab Emirates and Qatar in which the Qataris have for a long time supported the president and the Emiratis in turn are supporting federal member states. This is undermining state building efforts and raising tensions significantly between member states and the federal government and between Somaliland and the Somali Federal Government as well.

To end, I have three recommendations for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee at this point.

I agree that we need to nominate and approve a new U.S. ambassador who can go to Mogadishu when we open our embassy in August.

In addition, I think that the State Department should be instructed to coordinate activities between the Near East Bureau and the Africa Bureau to try to mitigate the destabilizing impact of this Gulf state rivalry that I have mentioned.

Secondly, I think it would be important for Congress to appropriate or shift money from the military effort to governance reform programs and also to help combat corruption in Somalia.

And last but not least, I think it would be important to use U.S. influence and leverage to try to force—not try to force, but to encourage the Somali federal government and federal member states to resolve their differences over the division of power and respon-

sibilities between the Federal Government and Federal Member States and to institutionalize those structures as well.

And I thank you for your attention and look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Hogendoorn follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. HOGENDOORN

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Chairman Flake, Ranking member Booker and the other members of the Subcommittee on African Affairs for inviting Crisis Group to testify today on Security and Governance in Somalia. Crisis Group has been working on Somalia since 2002, and we continue to follow events there closely from our office in Nairobi, with frequent visits to the country's various regions.

Crisis Group is an independent, non-partisan, non-governmental organization that provides field-based analysis, policy advice and recommendations to governments, the United Nations, the European Union and other multilateral organizations on the prevention and resolution of deadly conflict. Crisis Group publishes some 80 reports and briefing papers annually, as well as a monthly CrisisWatch bulletin. Our staff covers over 60 countries and is focused on conflict prevention and mitigation, as well as post-conflict peacebuilding.

DRONE STRIKES WILL NOT WORK: THE PRIMACY OF POLITICS

The U.S. cannot defeat Al-Shabaab with targeted killings, special forces operations and military training. At best this approach will degrade Al-Shabaab's military capability and ability to strike domestic and foreign targets, but, as we learned in Vietnam and again in Afghanistan and Iraq, these efforts are not sustainable unless the Somali Federal and State Governments address the chronic political infighting, poor governance and corruption that drive communities to support, or at the very least tolerate, Al-Shabaab. Yet the most significant U.S. efforts are military, and other efforts to promote good governance and development are hampered by the lack of a U.S. ambassador to Somalia and onerous State Department and USAID security restrictions (most U.S. government officials cannot leave the Mogadishu airport), as well as poor coordination among external actors.

What, then, is the most effective way to counter Al-Shabaab? The answer is not necessarily more money. Rather it is smarter assistance, based on a sound understanding of local political dynamics, that employs carrots and sticks to nudge Somali leaders to support governance reform and better administration. Otherwise expensive technical assistance and training programs may have only temporary and limited impact.

We can draw some lessons from the record. Somalia, which is roughly divided into three major regions, can be thought of as a natural experiment in terms of how much international assistance—be it money or military support—is necessary to promote stability, with Somaliland receiving the least, Puntland some more, and South and Central Somalia the most. Instructively, Somaliland, which relies the most on local political compromise, is the most stable, while South and Central Somalia, the region that gets the most international attention and military support, is the most insecure.

THE GOVERNMENT IS WINNING, KIND OF

Admittedly, the Federal Government of Somalia has made tremendous strides since 2010, when it controlled only a small district in Mogadishu. Since then it has, with enormous support from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), pushed Al-Shabaab out of most urban centers. The government has also helped establish, sometime grudgingly, five federal member states (not counting the self-declared independent Somaliland) to provide more local administration. But Al-Shabaab is resilient. The gains are fragile and very dependent on international military and donor support.

Popular support for the government also continues to wax and wane. The widespread euphoria that greeted the election of a new president, Mohammed Abdullahi "Farmajo", in February 2017 has been replaced by acute anxiety. The huge expectations of change and reform are unmet; politics remains as fractured as ever; AMISOM is planning its withdrawal at a time when the threat from Al-Shabaab remains potent; and many of the country's familiar governance and security challenges are compounded by new external and geopolitical pressures.

Progress in rebuilding the state is fundamentally limited because there is no national political settlement and the allocation of power and resources is poorly, if at all, defined. (One of the biggest problems is the ill-defined division of power between the president, prime minister and parliament.) The government has continued to rule based on the 2012 Provisional Constitution. Despite much prompting, even threats, from international donors, efforts to draft and promulgate a permanent constitution have been stymied by disagreements and political infighting. The lack of an agreed political settlement at the national and federal levels has meant that governance tends to be based on ad-hoc deals and arrangements.

Farmajo's challenges have been compounded by several political missteps. He campaigned with a nationalist message, saying he would stand up to meddling foreign powers, and lost much domestic goodwill when the government handed over an Ethiopian-Somali rebel commander to Addis Ababa and declared the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), fighting for the self-determination for Somalis in the Somali Region of Ethiopia (also known as the Ogaden), a terrorist group.

Another misstep was an ill-advised decision to authorize a deadly December 2017 raid on opposition leader Abdurahman Abdishakur's residence in Mogadishu, in which five of his bodyguards were killed. This raid was a serious setback for democratization and reconciliation processes. Abdishakur claims it was an assassination attempt. The government denies this.

A day after the raid a federal government minister was sent to meet with elders of Abdishakur's Habar Gedir clan to apologize and offer compensation. The minister admitted "a mistake occurred". In the absence of an independent probe and with two sharply contrasting, highly partisan narratives, the truth may never come to light. Irrespective, the government has come out badly. The opposition claims the raid reflects the regime's "growing authoritarian tendencies".

These tendencies stem in large part from the pressure, from its nationalist support base and even the wider public, to act tough. But in seeking to appear tough it is upsetting the unwritten rules of governing the fragile state. Instead of building alliances and winning new friends, it is antagonizing powerful clan constituencies and fomenting new tensions, especially in Mogadishu.

For example, observers blame federal government official's abrasive style and provocative rhetoric for stoking tensions in the disputed territories of Sool and Sanaag, where a dangerous military standoff between Somaliland and Puntland risks escalating into open conflict.

In addition, there is an unresolved and knotty issue of whether the capital Mogadishu, estimated to have over 2 million inhabitants (out of an estimated 14 million for the whole country), should also be its own federal state would have been easier to manage had the government used more tact and discretion. Instead, Villa Somalia picked a fight with then Mayor Thabit Abdi Mohammed, who championed the city's statehood, and used rough tactics to have him removed. The mayor's own alleged corruption and unbridled ambitions ultimately served as a good pretext to fire him, but the manner of his ouster has solidified the opposition in Mogadishu and cost the Federal Government huge support.

#### CORRUPTION

Government corruption remains a massive problem in Somalia, which is rated the most corrupt country in the world by Transparency International. Official fraud, theft and malfeasance have undermined decades of international efforts to rebuild a Somali state. Official venality is a major recruiting point for Al-Shabaab. Although some international donors now give stipends directly to troops (the U.S. recently suspended its payments because of corruption and human rights concerns), many government soldiers are poorly paid and provisioned. It is worth noting that several important areas in the Shabelle river valley are now in the control of Al-Shabaab after government troops pulled out in protest because some of them have not received salaries for months. On 14 December 2017, the U.S. suspended food and fuel aid for most of Somalia's armed forces over corruption concerns.

According to the Somalia Monitoring Group's 2 November 2017 report, "despite limited improvements in public financial management, federal institutions remain incapable of addressing pervasive corruption. Mechanisms established to review Government contracts have continued to be circumvented, and the lack of transparency regarding company ownership leaves all Government contracts open to concerns of nepotism. Government ministries continue to bypass the Treasury Single Account at the Central Bank of Somalia, avoiding oversight of their revenues by the Federal Government's fiscal authorities. The misappropriation and misuse of public land in Mogadishu is ongoing, despite pledges from the previous administration to

address the problem. The printing of counterfeit Somali currency in Puntland continues to undermine economic stability and has prompted outbreaks of civil unrest”.

#### FEDERAL TENSIONS

The government has finalized the broad outlines of the federal system, comprising five member states (Somaliland continues to insist it is independent, and calls for a Benadir state, centered on Mogadishu, remain politically contentious). But, the process of federal member states creation was often arbitrary, contested by local communities, and designed to lock out certain minority clans from power. As a result, it has lacked broad legitimacy. It also failed to precisely demarcate state borders and the new federal state borders clash with traditional notions of clan “boundaries” or “ancestral homelands”. Unclear territorial claims increase tensions and feed grievances, which can trigger armed conflict.

Nevertheless, the five existing states have been broadly accepted and the government is moving forward—if very slowly—with efforts to implement federalism. Unfortunately, the provisional constitution is vague about resource and power sharing between the government and member states, which has led to chronic tensions between Mogadishu and regional capitals.

#### CLAN RECONCILIATION

National and sub-national state-building cannot occur without a national political settlement and reconciliation. Every Somalia Federal Government has paid lip service to reconciliation but balked at crucial implementation stages. National reconciliation must not be about restoring a romanticized organic relationship among clans but rather about fostering peaceful resolution of conflicts, rebuilding cohesion and mutual solidarity, encouraging inclusive local governance, addressing material resource disputes, and where possible seeking hybrid ways to address past crimes. To achieve this, the federal and state governments should be co-facilitators of a bottom-up reconciliation process, providing resources, security, strategic guidelines and oversight, but desisting from attempts to control the process.

#### SPILL-OVER OF MIDDLE EAST RIVALRIES

There are also increasingly assertive new players trying to influence developments in Somalia and all of the Horn of Africa. Somalia has traditionally enjoyed financial support from Saudi Arabia and Egypt; more recently Turkey, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have emerged as big players. Farmajo’s pragmatic style and preference to keep Somalia out of the feud between Saudi Arabia and its ally the UAE, on one side, and Qatar and Turkey, on the other, has had limited success. Relations sharply deteriorated with the Saudi-led bloc in early 2017, triggering temporary suspension by Riyadh of direct budgetary support.

The Saudis seem keen to avoid severely punishing Farmajo’s administration. The Emiratis, who have built a diverse portfolio of military and commercial interests, with huge stakes to protect, seem less constrained. They have greatly stepped up their covert funding of opposition politicians and cultivated close direct relations with Somalia’s federal states. A decision by the states in late 2017 to issue a joint communiqué critical of Mogadishu’s neutral position, inflaming tensions between Mogadishu and the federal states.

Suspicion that the UAE is actively fomenting opposition to the Farmajo administration triggered a violent crackdown on politicians accused of receiving Emirati funds in December 2017. More recently, President Farmajo declared illegal a deal that the Emirati firm DP World negotiated with Somaliland, and Ethiopia, to upgrade and operate Berbera Port. The Lower House of Parliament went further by banning it and declaring DP World a threat to the country’s sovereignty, independence and unity. Also at stake is a \$336 million agreement that Puntland negotiated with DP World to allow it to run and upgrade Bosaso port (a Turkish company operated Mogadishu port).

Somaliland President Muse Bihi Abdi has described Somalia’s rejection of the port deal the former signed with Ethiopia and DP World as a “declaration of war.” An upcoming trip by Farmajo to Qatar—widely viewed as an attempt to spite the UAE—marks an escalation and is almost certain to worsen relations.

#### INSECURITY

A year ago, Farmajo promised to prioritize security, rebuild the national army and crush the Islamist Al-Shabaab insurgency in two years. In May 2017 the government unveiled a national security pact to donors at the London conference to address many of the systemic and structural challenges that have stymied progress

on security. Crucially, the strategy was backed by the federal states and Somalia's international partners. To complement these efforts, the government declared an amnesty that saw a modest increase in the number of high-profile defections from Al-Shabaab, among them Mukhtar Robow, who had been a senior commander.

Despite these early positive steps, the overall security situation is far from improved and the implementation of the security plan is much more daunting than anticipated. Al-Shabaab stepped up its attacks from the start of 2017. The 14 October 2017 attack at the Zoppe Junction in Mogadishu was the deadliest, claiming the lives of over 500 people. A six-month deadline for the re-integration of 18,000 Somalia National Army troops, and the establishment of federal/ regional state police departments has since been missed, partly as a result of tensions between the national government and the federal states. An internal Operational Readiness Assessment commissioned by Prime Minister Kheyre highlighted the extent of the dysfunction within the army and the security services.

Against this backdrop, the security challenges the government faces are formidable. Al-Shabaab remains resilient (see Crisis Group Commentary, "Somalia's Al-Shabaab Down but Far from Out", 27 June 2016, and Crisis Group Briefing, "Managing the Disruptive Aftermath of Somalia's Worst Terror Attack", 20 October 2017). It controls tracts of rural land in south central Somalia and supply routes between towns, pursues a steady campaign of car bombings, assassinations and other attacks in Mogadishu and has targeted and in some cases overrun isolated AMISOM and Somali army bases. Beginning in 2016, a militant faction loyal to Islamic State established a following in Puntland (see, Crisis Group Commentary, "The Islamic State Threat in Somalia's Puntland State", 17 November 2016). This group has grown from a few dozen in 2016 to as many as 200 this year, according to the U.N. Although the Somali Islamic State, is the sworn enemy to Al-Shabaab, their growing presence highlights how armed extremists exploit state disorder and local tensions to develop safe havens and rebuild after otherwise debilitating defeats.

#### THE AMISOM DRAWDOWN

AMISOM played a key role in pushing Al-Shabaab's conventional forces from most urban centers, but the mission costs approximately \$800 million a year and, by protecting the government from most Al-Shabaab attacks, has perversely reduced the incentive for Somali officials to spend the resources and make the necessary political compromises to create effective security services able to defeat Al-Shabaab. Thus last year international donors began the process of implementing the mission's "exit strategy" and tentative drawdown, as well as yet another effort to build up and professionalize the army. This work on professionalization is important for Somalia's future stability and ought to be assisted, even those efforts are severely undermined by endemic corruption and nepotism as well as clan fears that the military will be used to enforce the domination of certain other clans at their expense (as happened during the rule of President Siad Barre, from 1969 to 1991).

The plan for AMISOM's withdrawal requires a sustainable national force to take over security responsibility and mitigate the negative effects of regional competition. Plans are to train and equip an 18,000 strong army with units answering to both the federal and state governments. Yet, it is not clear how feasible this plan will be. Moreover, without a clearer and institutionalized division of power, resources and security responsibilities between the Federal Government and federal member states, as well as among federal state administrations, current security gains against Al-Shabaab will be difficult to sustain.

Although there have been some attempts to coordinate efforts to build the Somali security services, more could be done to harmonize and synchronize the efforts of the EU, U.S., U.K., Turkey and Gulf states which all are involved in troop training. In addition the U.S. has increased drone and special forces operations in an effort to degrade Al-Shabaab's military capacity, but increased involvement carries risks of delegitimizing the government. More training and equipment could help, but increased airstrikes—especially ones that lead to civilian deaths—could inflame public opinion and exacerbate clan tensions.

Complicating U.S. efforts, Al-Shabaab is strategically astute. Rather than hold hard-to-defend towns and villages, it has increased suicide bombings in Mogadishu and attacks against exposed African Union peacekeepers and Somali government forces as they try to reopen Somalia's main supply roads. Currently AMISOM and Somali National Army forces are trying to reopen the highway linking Mogadishu to Baidoa 150 miles to the west. On Friday, Al-Shabaab militants ambushed an AMISOM supply convoy about 25 miles north of Mogadishu, killing at

least 10 soldiers and destroying most of the 20 trucks. It was the latest of many deadly attacks the militant group has waged against the AU forces.

While the mission is dangerous, it is also lucrative for individual soldiers and their countries. The AMISOM troop-contributing countries now want the U.N. Security Council to reconsider its September 2017 resolution on phased withdrawal and handover of security responsibility to Somali security forces. The countries Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, Ethiopia and Djibouti now claim, with some grounds, that the resolution's timeline is not realistic and would lead to a reversal of the gains made by the peacekeepers, but the Security Council is right to put the onus on the Federal Government to deliver.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

1. Insist the administration of President Donald Trump identify an experienced diplomat to become the U.S. Ambassador to Somalia, and quickly act on this nomination. Ensure that the ambassador designate has the necessary resources, staff and the latitude to robustly promote U.S. goals in Somalia. Ideally the ambassador should be in place before the embassy in Mogadishu opens in August. Furthermore, require the State Department to identify focal points in the Bureaus of African Affairs and Near Eastern Affairs to coordinate efforts to mitigate the destabilizing impact of Gulf state rivalries in the Horn of Africa.

2. Correct the imbalance of U.S. funding supporting military engagement versus diplomatic and development assistance. Appropriate or shift money to good governance programs, both at the federal and states levels, in Somalia and instruct the State Department and USAID to develop an incentives strategy to promote more effective governance and administration, as well as seriously tackle corruption.

3. The U.S. and its allies must use their influence to prioritize for Somalis the strengthening and institutionalization of relations between the federal member states and Federal Government. They need to work together to complete the agreed-upon roadmap and milestones designed for Somalia's recovery, including finalizing the permanent constitution and federalization process, preparing for direct elections, and promoting bottom up reconciliation.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you, Dr. Hogendoorn.

Mr. Hashi, you mentioned that you cannot get to Mars on dollar store items, talking about the finances that the government has available to it. Those are constricted largely because they have been unable to reconcile with the international finance institutions in terms of lending or future lending. How is that going? Is there any progress that is being made in that regard?

Mr. HASHI. I think the only area that the government can get a passing grade is interactions with the international financial institutions. The IMF actually set certain milestones for the government to increase its local revenue generation, and it has been doing enough and actually winning the respect of the IMF, from the World Bank.

But the government only controls Mogadishu. The rest of Somalia is controlled by other regional states who control ports and airports, and they use whatever resources they get to actually run the regional states within Somalia. So on its taxing the citizens of Mogadishu who are resisting actually excessive taxation, but overall, the government has to take control of the entire country and have unified taxation system.

And the other thing is Somalia has moved from a unitary state to a federal system. But the laws are not set up to ensure, you know, fiscal federalism, where the government can collect taxes, control the country, and distribute and share and the like. So it is just able to collect about \$11 million a month in Mogadishu airport and port, but that is not enough to provide service. Whatever money it gets, it just goes to salaries to the police and—

Senator FLAKE. You mentioned that 99 percent of revenue goes straight to salaries for civil servants. If those salaries are not paid,

what happens? It would just make life easier for Al-Shabaab to recruit and whatnot.

Mr. HASHI. Yes. Not only that but just being about 50 employees for a particular ministry and Mogadishu will not make the Somali Government look like a government. It needs to provide services. And the Somali population is about 12 million. 5.4 million of them, according to the United Nations, need help. Seventy percent of them are the youth under 30. They do not have employment. So the government needs more than \$270 million to look like a government.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you.

Dr. Bacon, in my office, you talked about visiting Somalia years ago and then just recently. Can you talk about what are the differences? What did you see? You talked about going in some of the rural areas, and as has been mentioned by a few of you, Al-Shabaab is actually delivering services, meting out justice, establishing some semblance of order. How much of a problem is that for a government to retake those areas or to compete with that?

Dr. BACON. I think it really has most clearly emerged how central the justice piece is to the way forward in Somalia. We do talk a lot about the security sector and the army and the police, and those all are important.

But one of the things that Al-Shabaab has really been able to distinguish itself through is its courts. And people are using its courts who do not necessarily even support the organization or its aims. Its courts are seen as fairly efficient, relatively uncorrupt, and relatively fair. And so that is one of the ways that it is able to supplant the still fragile authority of the Somali federal government.

And it seems to me that that has to be a really key component moving forward because justice in that kind of insecure situation is really central to security, and rather than justice following security, it seems like justice needs to be part of the security picture. And that I think is really one of the things that has changed over time, and that is one of the things that brought the rise of the Islamic courts and then Al Shabaab was this really central piece of justice. So in my view, that is a critical piece of what Al-Shabaab has been able to provide much more so than its actual ideology.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you.

Mr. Yarnell, you mentioned the U.S. admitted and resettled about 10,000 refugees in 2016 compared with only 177 over the course of the past five months. Tell us more about the U.S. role and our admission of refugees or what kind of impact that has on some of our allies and neighbors in terms of their own ability or willingness to accept refugees.

Mr. YARNELL. Sure. That is a very important question.

As I mentioned, resettlement exists as an option for the refugees who are the most vulnerable who may never be able to return home because of particular threats and who also face threats in their place of refuge, for instance, in Kenya. So UNHCR, the U.N. refugee agency, identifies those who particularly need resettlement as an option, and then they move through the screening and all the security and health checks before they are resettled. So for those who have been identified and who face those particular threats, be-

cause of the new measures in place, the option to be resettled has essentially been closed because the numbers have dropped so dramatically. And at the same time, because it is moving so slowly, the U.N. has stopped even identifying new people for resettlement to the U.S.

I think more generally it reverberates through the camp. People who thought that resettlement may be an option see that that is no longer there. I am hearing people who work in Dadaab that more people are returning to Somalia prematurely because they feel like they have no other option. And at the same time, when we are asking Kenya to do more, Ethiopia to do more, other countries to host hundreds of thousands of refugees, it is difficult for us to ask them to hold up that commitment when we are closing the doors on refugees ourselves.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you.

Dr. Hogendoorn, what impact have neighboring countries and not so neighboring countries like China had on the political situation and stability in Somalia? Obviously, the African Union with AMISOM is supporting troops. What about others outside of the area, particularly China?

Dr. HOGENDOORN. As I have testified, the real problem is a coordination problem. You have lots and lots of different actors who are trying to exert influence in Somalia. They may all want to stabilize the country, but I think that there are significant disagreements about how to stabilize the country and, to some degree, who should be leading that stabilization process.

China has been a significant player in that it is starting to support the security services. Obviously, the African Union has been an incredibly important actor in providing AMISOM, which has cost lots of troop-contributing countries many, many hundreds of lives and certainly has cost the international community hundreds of millions of dollars a year.

I still contest that right now the biggest problem really is that the Horn of Africa in general and Somalia in particular has become a proxy battleground for influence for a number of Middle Eastern countries, particularly the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, but others as well. And unfortunately, a lot of that influence is being exerted through money and through support that is very difficult to observe, but that is really fraying at the delicate, fragile consensus that exists both in Mogadishu and also between Mogadishu and these federal member states.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you.

Senator Booker.

Senator BOOKER. I am going to defer to Senator Merkley.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Ranking Member, for the opportunity to ask a few questions.

I wanted to start just by thanking you, Mr. Yarnell, for the work of Refugees International and for the humanitarian community working to address such a horrific plight and challenge, complicated both by food production and the conflict of war.

I want to take my time, however, to address some of the issues regarding Al-Shabaab. And, Mr. Hashi, you refer to, quote, "petrodollars should be used to avert starvation not to put this



fledgling country in the middle of a geopolitical power play.” And you refer to the dispute between United Arab Emirates and Qatar. And Dr. Hogendoorn has referred to this proxy challenge as well.

Exactly how are they weighing in and complicating the conflict?

Mr. HASHI. Thank you. I think I am really exaggerating if I say that the threat emanating from the Gulf countries is as bad as the threat of Al-Shabaab because the money they are pouring into the system and the rivalries they are supporting could actually unravel the entire Federal Government institutions as we speak today because even today, about a hundred or so MPs—they submitted motion—are going to unseat the number two in the country. There is another rival motion and some MPs are going to unseat the Prime Minister and his cabinet. Somaliland and Somalia—Somaliland is up in the north. It wants to secede. There has been ongoing negotiations between Somalia and Somaliland.

Because of the company in the UAE, Dubai World, taking over Berbera Port in the north in Somaliland, the Somali parliament said 2 days ago—that company is persona non grata in Somalia. They just are barred from Somalia. As a result, the Somaliland leadership now are in Dubai or Abu Dhabi.

So the entire country actually is bubbling and if there is actually a big bang in the next few weeks, I will not be surprised solely because of the energy and the effort and the meddling of those countries while Somalis were experiencing famine in 2012 and even in 2016, and our Arab brothers up there—they were not helping us much. So the least they can do is to just stay away from our country so at least you can stitch this country together.

Senator MERKLEY. So neither of these two countries are funding Al-Shabaab, but they are funding different groups of politicians and different movements that are destabilizing the effort to have a coherent political process.

Mr. HASHI. Yes. They are supporting Somali political parties in the region and that can destabilize the entire system.

Senator MERKLEY. One the issues that is often raised and has been raised here is in regard to corruption. You served in the government. You were there firsthand. We know how difficult it is to establish any nation going forward if there is not a system and an ethic that is about the success of the country and not about individuals taking payments and being steered in different directions. It appears like so far the efforts to take this on have been ineffective. What more can be done?

Mr. HASHI. I think it requires political leadership at the top to have zero tolerance for corruption, but also the reason corruption is not a big problem in many parts of the world is because you have systems in place. And when there is no effective institutions and the judiciary, as somebody just said earlier, just human beings, when they see cash, usually something bad happens. So a system actually can deal with that. And unfortunately, the system is very weak.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you.

And, Dr. Bacon, it has been noted that AMISOM and Somali forces have driven Al-Shabaab from 80 percent of the territory once controlled. Meanwhile, we have testimony from Mr. Hashi that the capital has never been more insecure. And AMISOM—the plan is

to start reducing their forces. Is this phased reduction premature or dangerous? Is the force right-sized now or does it actually need to be larger?

Dr. BACON. I think one of the tricks about assessing the situation is measures like the amount of territory Al-Shabaab controls can be misleading when you look at it compared to its peak. I mean, yes, the group controls significant strongholds in the rural area, and it also exerts a pretty pervasive influence over other parts of the country, including Mogadishu. And it does so, as I mentioned, through the courts. It does so through fairly effective taxation, something the government has struggled to do. It has a much more pervasive influence throughout Somalia than its territorial holdings would suggest. And that is to say that, yes, there is the issue of as long as AMISOM stays, there is a morale hazard that things that the Somali Government and Somali forces need to do are not done because AMISOM is doing them.

Having said that, a premature AMISOM withdrawal in my view could lead to the collapse of the Somali federal government, but would certainly lead to expansive gains by Al-Shabaab. The group is still sufficiently strong that it could conquer much more territory and expand its influence significantly if AMISOM withdraws prematurely.

Senator MERKLEY. You have mentioned that the courts they provide meet with some significant acceptance or even appreciation. And just as you were talking, I could have taken your testimony and put it on top of the Taliban at one point in Afghanistan. And this also accentuates the need for the government to be able to be an even better system. But the corruption I just mentioned undermines faith in the public institutions.

How do we overcome this?

Dr. BACON. I have been struck by those parallels myself between the Taliban and Al Shabaab. There is no Pakistan, though, in the case of Al-Shabaab. So you do not have the kind of external problem to the same degree, although you clearly have other ones.

I think one of the things that Al-Shabaab is able to accomplish is its courts are considered fairly credible and legitimate, and it also has the coercive power that people will not reject its rulings. They fear it enough that it will punish anyone who does not adhere to its rulings. So it has got a combination of credibility and coercion that is pretty effective in delivering the services that it does and that is difficult, to some degree, for a government to do, to exert that kind of coercion in the same way. But ultimately—you are right—there is something of a competition between Al-Shabaab and the government in some of these realms like justice, and the government has to win that competition in order to really become a sustainable, credible government.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you all very much for your testimony and bringing your expertise to bear on this challenge.

Thank you.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you.

Senator Booker.

Senator BOOKER. So, again, I am grateful, as Senator Merkley said, for you all being here.

I am just trying to get this from a larger perspective, and I think, Dr. Bacon, your name is very intimidating to me as a vegan.

[Laughter.]

Senator BOOKER. But I will go forward anyway.

That competition between the things that Al-Shabaab is providing—if I could synthesize, and you guys can tell me if this is too simplistic, but I am really looking for a governing strategy for this committee about the things that we need to be putting influence on. And I appreciate, Dr. Hogendoorn, you were very specific at the end of your testimony. This is what you guys should do in your three very good points. But tell me if I am getting this right.

One of the most important things I think Mr. Hashi was saying is that we are not going to win—I should not say “win” as a direct competition, but we are not going to succeed unless we have a strong, functioning government in the country. And it seems to me—I am just sitting here taking my notes—that there are really five things that are undermining the success of the government.

The first one is just the ability to provide security for a nation, fundamentally important.

The second thing is these external threats. I would even call them environmental threats. We have a serious problem with global warming that is causing just drought after drought, and we are about to have what seems to be another serious drought that is going to add to the humanitarian crisis, undermining the government’s legitimacy.

The next thing, Mr. Hashi you just said very plainly, is a government of that size just does not have the kind of resources it needs to provide for its residents, which drives another one of the five things I would say, which is just the outright corruption. And then you add to that the geopolitical issues or you have the competitions between Qatar and the UAE.

Those seem to be the five things. And you have an Al-Shabaab that is capitalizing on a lot of these things by, as you said, Dr. Bacon, providing less corruption, more fair, providing resources, providing security.

And so the pressure points that I would be looking for as strategies from this committee would be what can we do to help with those things because, again, I have some serious concerns about our military strategies even though our increasing drone strikes obviously has had collateral benefits of adding to security, but it is not going to win this. This is not going to be won by a military. Nor would I really want to see if there are things we are not doing to achieve these ends, putting more American lives in jeopardy and, frankly, doing things that often I think in the long run add to more security concerns when you fly drones and have collateral civilian damage. Now, pair that with, again, the fact that AMISOM is saying they are going to be pulling out.

So can I just deal with these things real quick?

Number one, the humanitarian crisis. Mr. Yarnell, that is serious and pending. And you are telling me that the things that we should be thinking about, if I hear you clearly, is one is humanitarian aid is making a difference, and two, America’s moral authority of shutting down our borders to Somali refugees—these are two things that this Senate committee and the United States Senate could be

dealing with, making sure we are putting resources in to deal with an agonizing humanitarian crisis. And number two is, hey, step up on this issue of refugees. Stop letting the Canadians out-American us.

Mr. YARNELL. As a dual Canadian-American, I appreciate that reference.

Senator BOOKER. Yes.

Mr. YARNELL. No. You are exactly right. Providing robust humanitarian assistance, to use a phrase that others have used, is that it is not just the right thing to do, it is the smart thing to do. The assistance provided by Congress saved lives. At the same time, as others have mentioned, when the U.S. is putting tremendous resources into supporting the Somali Government and trying to eradicate corruption and help it expand its governance, defeat Al-Shabaab, if the country experiences widespread famine, that drops the bottom out of those efforts. So I think that you will achieve multiple objectives by responding with a robust humanitarian—

Senator BOOKER. Anything else I am missing that you would advise us to deal with this humanitarian crisis in the coming drought that I think we are going to see again? Anything else that we should be thinking about before Senator Flake and I go on to the next thing of the day?

Mr. YARNELL. I just cannot emphasize enough the positive impact the funding played last year. I know that there is often funding fatigue, but it is not the kind of thing where you can just provide assistance now and then the next year will be fine. The successive rains have been eroding the capacity of Somalis to respond to drought. And so it is going to take multiple successful rains before people can get back to their previous pre-crisis levels. So to think that just because last year the funding was strong that we are out of the woods I think is shortsighted. So just keep that message strong.

Senator BOOKER. Anybody else want something to the humanitarian issue? That is my takeaways right now. Okay, fine.

These two I would maybe say the same solution: the rivalries in the region, this proxy war that seems to be playing out in details, as well as the corruption. To me, we are not going to deal with those things but for great diplomacy coming from the United States of America. That has got to be the way you deal with this is having a diplomatic strategy that is focused on diminishing the rivalries going on between Turkey, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar. All of this playing out in that region is really going to take a diplomatic effort beyond the staff capacities of Senator Flake and myself. Correct? Yes. Okay.

And then the same thing with corruption. I think that that is probably two things. One would be, again, having an ambassador there in place to have straight talk, carrot-stick talk with the political leadership in that country, and I think Mr. Hashi is pointing out there is also a resource problem that in some ways is fueling the corruption. Am I correct in assuming that the American role that would most be desirable would be focusing on diplomacy and resources to help with institution building that can insulate from corruption? Mr. Hashi?

Mr. HASHI. Thank you.

Yes. If all the problems that you have mentioned and others listed—if they are not dealt with and solve them rather urgently, Al-Shabaab will be the beneficiary of this. Basically this government is just so weak, it just cannot withstand all those different pressures coming in.

And I think one thing the Somalis can do—Somalis, what they can do is to just get the politics right. If they just actually understand this congested global system where the attention of the U.S. is required in many different places or the attention of others or the U.N. or whatever—they need to take advantage of the opportunities they have or the attention they have like the one that you are giving to Somalia today and just do the things they can do. They can actually fix issues of corruption and others.

Somebody was talking about SNA, the Somali National Army. I think, yes, maybe there is corruption of the leadership, but the rank and file—they have just paid so much, and so many of them have died. In the past 6, 7, 8 years, maybe more than 10,000 people died fighting with Al-Shabaab. And there are units that the U.S. supports that has been effective, were effective. So with mentoring, you know, hands-on help with certain institutions, Somalis can do their part, and the international partners can also help.

So Somalis need to get the politics right, stop unnecessary squabbling. The U.S. and others can actually tell the external actors their interference is enhancing and helping Al-Shabaab. It is actually super urgent otherwise. The Somali government system is just weaker and weaker, and that just makes Al-Shabaab the winner. And also extra help. You know, we do not have to do the same thing again and again for 20–30 years and then expecting things to improve. It will not improve whatever we are doing together as Somalis and our international partners.

Senator BOOKER. So just to wrap that up then, clearly security is needed. There is a threat if AMISOM ramps down too quickly, but some of the aid that we are providing in terms of military assistance is helping the Somali National Army. But again, I think Senator Flake said this well, it does really remind me of the challenges in Afghanistan in the sense that if a government cannot provide security, it undermines the legitimacy of that government and its effectiveness.

Look, I want to wrap up. If Senator Flake will allow me one last area, just some insight for me because I think that the former Secretary of State was focusing on just the influence of China in the region and some worries I have about creating situations where there is a greater African debt in general. But is that a concern? If I look at a strategy for Somalia, the Chinese are playing a constructive role for the ends that I have outlined, or is that something that you would say, hey, Cory, red light here? You should be concerned and focused on a pernicious influence when it comes to the Chinese in Somalia. Anybody can take that.

Mr. HASHI. I would just say China is not in Somalia yet. They happen to be in Djibouti and in the neighborhood, but if things settle down, I am sure they will be close to us.

Senator BOOKER. So I just want to say in conclusion, way over my time, but I just have some concerns that we do not have a strategy coming from the State Department and the administra-

tion. And that lack of strategy and doubling down on doing the same things, just trying to do more of the same things is not necessarily going to be producing the results that we need. Clearly, I think that from this, Senator Flake and my teams are starting to see a strategy for the Senate that we can advocate with our colleagues.

But it is a serious alarm for me—and Senator Flake has heard me on this rant before—that we do not have State Department officials here. We are not able to ask them if they have a strategy. I do not know if they do. They do not have a diplomatic reach there. It raises serious alarms that America could be more precise in achieving the ends for the great people of Somalia, and I just want to ring that bell one more time that this is very, very troublesome to me that we have an area of the world that is in serious crisis, from a humanitarian crisis, environmental crisis, and more immediate for the United States of America serious security concerns for our country as well as theirs. And I am hoping that we will see with the new Secretary of State perhaps a concern for Africa, from the Congo to Somalia to South Sudan, just not having the diplomatic resources necessary to help advance the cause of our country, as well as the countries I have mentioned.

With that, Senator Flake, I am through.

Senator FLAKE. Well, thank you.

And picking up on what Senator Booker said on our commitment and the State Department's commitment, Dr. Bacon, you spent a good deal of time at State. Are there career Foreign Service officers who are capable who are willing to serve as Ambassador to Somalia?

Dr. BACON. I have no doubt that there are both of those things there, people who are willing and capable. And I could not agree more that having strong diplomatic presence at this particular juncture is absolutely essential. It is essential particularly because of the external meddling. It is essential because you have this conflict between the federal member states and the Federal Government. U.S. leadership and diplomacy is absolutely essential to this process.

Senator FLAKE. Is it concerning to you? Dr. Hogendoorn, I will ask you this. Is it concerning to you, and does it send a signal we do not want to send to our allies and partners in this, that we have not, one year into this administration or beyond a year, named an Assistant Secretary for Africa or filled envoy positions or ambassadorships?

Dr. HOGENDOORN. Well, I certainly think it sends a strong signal as to how important Africa is considered by the administration, and certainly I hope that is rectified very quickly.

Just to add to what Dr. Bacon was saying, I do also think it is important to note that while we are all very, very concerned about protecting U.S. diplomats when they are in the field, there is a huge problem when it comes to working in Somalia with these security restrictions that diplomats face. Currently most U.S. officials, particularly from the State Department and USAID, are confined to the airport. They can, in fact, not even present their credentials to the president because they cannot travel to the presidency. Mark travels throughout Somalia. I have traveled through-

out Somalia. Abdirashid lives in Mogadishu. I imagine Dr. Bacon has traveled extensively through Somalia.

We are—or at least the State Department is ceding this entire field to the DoD and the intelligence community, which is one reason why I think the U.S. Government is focusing most of its efforts on those sectors of the U.S. foreign policy establishment. And I think that is a real question that the Senate needs to struggle with in terms of how do we develop a more sophisticated diplomatic and political strategy to help the Somalis rebuild their state.

Last but not least, because of this, what is also happening is that most of the support that is going to the Somali Federal Government stays in Mogadishu, which is one of the reasons why we are seeing these struggles in trying to expand state administration and services in the federal member states' capitals, in those areas where they really are at the front line of the battle to fight Al-Shabaab and its influence in rural areas.

Thank you.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you.

I know we both have to get to some other hearings, but one other question.

We referenced Afghanistan here. One thing that we have found in Afghanistan over the years is what was mentioned by somebody here, that there is incentive, that those in government in Somalia take advantage of the fact that AMISOM is there. It allows continuance of the status quo. It is not bad for some.

With that in mind, the 2020 date in terms of AMISOM's departure—how realistic is that? Is that needed simply because we have to move on and the security services have to take it upon themselves? Or what is your assessment of that 2020 date, Dr. Hashi?

Mr. HASHI. I think the 2020 date was not meant to be just a one-time pullout of AMISOM in Somalia. It is supposed to be a gradual process where every year one- or two-thousand leaves. Personally we are of the view it is not a bad idea because then the Somali SNA can get the attention and the support it requires. But it seems that AMISOM wants to stay on because they understand the insecurity that prevails throughout Somalia. But I just would say for the record, AMISOM paid dearly and they really helped liberate securing and also giving space to Somali politicians. It is up to Somalis to step up to the plate and build those security institutions in Somalia.

Senator FLAKE. Dr. Bacon, do you have any thoughts on that?

Dr. BACON. I agree that it creates a perverse incentive structure and that there is merit to thinking about how to reduce that.

Having said that, my perception is that the withdrawal has mostly been driven by concerns about who is going to fund this force. It has not been driven by the actual conditions on the ground, the capability of the Somali National Army, or the reduction of the threat from Al-Shabaab. So given that it is more of a financial consideration than a security one, I have concerns with the 2020 date. It seems premature.

Senator FLAKE. Any thoughts from the refugee angle?

Mr. YARNELL. Absolutely. I mean, one of the key lessons or takeaways from the 2011 famine compared to what is happening now is that in 2011 the government controlled very limited terri-

tory, and many of the people who died during the famine—it is because they were walking for hundreds of miles to get across into Ethiopia and Kenya, whereas now, because the government, with AMISOM’s support, controls more cities in the country, Somalis travel less distance to get assistance where aid workers have access. So if you have a premature withdrawal of AMISOM, if you have Al-Shabaab regain territory, fewer areas of access for aid workers to reach, I think the potential for another outflow of Somalis into neighboring countries is real.

Senator FLAKE. Doctor.

Dr. HOGENDOORN. Well, I do not want to dismiss the threat that is Al-Shabaab. Yet, at the same time, Al-Shabaab is probably, if you talk to most experts, somewhere in the neighborhood of 5,000 to 10,000 troops in total. So it is not a question of is Al-Shabaab that strong? It is a question of why is the government so weak? And I think again that has to do with the politics of it and the dysfunctions that the political infighting are creating both within the government as a whole and within the SNA specifically.

There are very poor parts of Somalia where they get the politics right, where there is very little Al-Shabaab presence, where they get relatively little assistance from the United States Government or others.

So, again, I am not saying we should cut support for the Somali Government or certainly not for refugee programs, but I think we do need to send a message to Somali politicians that, as Abdirashid says, they need to step up to the plate, and if they do not, there are going to be consequences.

Senator FLAKE. Well, thank you all for attending today and providing us with the benefits of your expertise, all of you. This has been helpful to us and I am sure other members of the committee who will read the testimony as well.

The record will remain open until the close of business tomorrow. I ask the witnesses to respond as promptly as possible, and your responses will be made a part of the record.

With the thanks of the subcommittee, this hearing is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:05 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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#### ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

##### RESPONSES OF DR. TRICIA BACON TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR CORY BOOKER

*Question.* In your opinion, what risk does this expanded military authority pose to U.S. forces being drawn in to local rivalries that have nothing to do with our efforts against Al Qaeda?

*Answer.* Military Operations Against Al Shabab—The United States has conducted military strikes in Somalia since 2007 against members of Al Qaeda and Al-Shabaab, under the justification of the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force.

In March 2017, President Trump declared parts of Somalia “areas of active hostilities”, which further expanded and devolved the authority to allow DoD to conduct strikes “in collective self-defense of Somali partners.”



I have been concerned about the use of this authority for the potential justification of strikes against entities not associated with Al-Shabaab or Al Qaeda, should partner Somali forces come under attack from, for example, local rivals, as was reportedly the case on September 28, 2016. In this incident, U.S. forces working with the Puntland Security Forces (PSF) launched a strike against the PSF's rival militia, not against Al-Shabab.

