

**SOMALIA: PROSPECTS FOR LASTING PEACE AND A UNIFIED RESPONSE  
TO EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM**

**Testimony**

**House Committee on Foreign Relations  
Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health**

**Presented by H.E. Abdirahman Mohamed Mohamud (Farole)  
President of Puntland State, Somalia**

**June 25, 2009**

Good afternoon Chairman Payne and Members of the Committee. On behalf of the people and Government of Puntland, I wish to express my gratitude to the Subcommittee for drawing attention to the grave situation in Somalia. Extremism threatens peace and stability not only in Somalia, but also in the surrounding region. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to testify today about security, humanitarian aid delivery and anti-piracy efforts in Somalia. I wish my Somaliland brothers could join us today. I am thankful to regional actors for participating at this historic hearing.

Puntland is a stable region in northeastern Somalia with a surface land comprising one-third of Somalia and close to half of the country's coastline. Approximately 3 million people live and work in Puntland, where there is not only a functioning constitutional government with security forces and public finance management, but it is built on a unique democratization process. Most recently, in January 2009, the State of Puntland held its third peaceful and transparent election followed by a smooth transition and a major shift to a new government. Puntland was established in 1998 as a result of a community wide constitutional conference aiming to form a basis for a future federal system in Somalia.

I believe there are five issues that continue to hamper the progress that the people of Somalia seek. They include:

1. Bleak political and security conditions in Somalia in the southern and central regions;
2. Uncertainty yet hope;
3. Extremism that produces terrorism;
4. Under-development that breeds violence and criminality; and
5. Piracy problems that are products of civil war.

I will try to be brief in my remarks, but the people of the United States need to understand the history of my country. Let me begin by saying that I was born in Puntland, but I lived and worked in Mogadishu before the political collapse in 1991. When the civil war erupted I fled with my family to Australia.

Since the collapse of the central government, the Somali nation-state has been fragmented. Currently, there are two stable northern states, Puntland and Somaliland. The south-central part of the country, including the capital Mogadishu, continues to be unstable.

Mogadishu is where the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) is isolated in pockets by religious factions. These factions claim different Islamic ideological orientations and control most of the south-central regions. The political and security conditions in Somalia can be best described as bleak and increasingly problematic.

Puntland is committed to a comprehensive and lasting peace in Somalia. Through broad-based political dialogue, we hope to produce an all-inclusive representation and institutional stability. Somali and foreign humanitarian aid workers are increasingly being targeted in south-central Somalia, disrupting the delivery of vital humanitarian assistance and life support. So far in 2009, five Somali journalists have been killed in Mogadishu and the perpetrators are still at large.

Due to the increasing violence, the displacement of civilians continues, contributing to a worsening humanitarian crisis that leaves 3 million people across Somalia in need of food assistance, according to U.N. estimates. There is a massive exodus of displaced civilians (IDPs) to neighboring regions, including Puntland, creating economically and socially unsustainable conditions and causing internal security and health concerns for Puntland.

In Puntland, we have achieved stability and have even become a safe-haven for hundreds of thousands of displaced civilians (IDPs), despite our meager resources. Taken as a case study, the “Puntland model”, which involves community commitment to establish self-government at the grassroots level, is a win-win solution.

In addition to the humanitarian issues, the threat posed by extremist and terrorist groups in Somalia is serious. If not tackled strategically, and in time, the regional and global security impact will be devastating. Since 1991, predatory warlords have caused instability to flourish in Somalia, setting the stage for extremism and terrorism. These threats, are based on several factors, including 1) the strategic geographical location of Somalia; and 2) foreign interests taking advantage of a power vacuum since 1991.

The unique strategic position of Somalia, particularly of Puntland, places it along the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean, at the core of international maritime trade, where over 20,000 commercial vessels passed through each year. Widespread lawlessness in south-central Somalia has encouraged different interest groups, with or without political agendas, to take advantage of the power vacuum, including groups that spread extremism.

Currently, the growing power of hardliners threatens peace and security in Somalia and the overall Horn of Africa region. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the **African Union Mission for Somalia** for its constructive contribution to secure and stabilize the situation in Mogadishu. The diminishing authority of the Transitional Federal Government in Mogadishu and an insurgency that is gaining strength marks the deteriorating situation in south-central Somalia.

Most recently, on June 18, the Transitional Federal Government Security Minister was killed among 20 others by a suicide bomber in Beledweyne, 275 miles south of Puntland. On June 21, the Transitional Parliament Speaker pleaded for international military intervention within 24 hours to defend against the insurgency, while the Cabinet asked the President to declare a state of emergency – today, Mogadishu remains in a state of emergency.

This present state of emergency is forcing tens of thousands of displaced civilians to flee to Puntland. This new exodus being imposed on the Puntland government includes: an economic burden; massive humanitarian needs and security concerns. Therefore, Puntland Government needs sufficient defense capacity in the Mudug region, which borders south-central Somalia.

There are limited options for dealing with extremist and terrorist threats in Somalia. The international community must support stable regions (for example, Puntland) and offer long-awaited development incentives in order to attract the attention of other Somali regions that see the benefit as counterweight to join extremism. With development, Puntland will become a model state for a future Federal Republic of Somalia where the focus is on institution-building and development, instead of violence and criminality.

I want to stress **Federalism**. Puntland eventually wants to join a genuine Federal Republic of Somalia. There is none now. We are determined to be a building block for a stable and prosperous Somalia. Think of the United States and its growing pains. There is hope for Somalia. We need your help so that we can play a constructive role.

I conclude with the largest problem - Piracy off the coast of Somalia and the State of Puntland. This act poses a continuing threat to maritime traffic, local and regional economies, and has provided a steady source of income for criminals. The Puntland government policy is strongly against ransom payments, which is the number one factor fueling the escalation of pirate attacks.

This phenomenon of piracy did not exist on its present scale in previous years. Our history tells us that the root cause of piracy is illegal fishing. After the collapse of the Coastal Defense, Somali fishermen began

attacking foreign trawler. Once the trawlers were armed, these fishermen turned into pirates and began attacking commercial vessels and demanding ransom payments.

As we look at solutions, we need to strengthen the security capacity of Puntland and to create a development project to enhance the livelihood of coastal communities. In an effort to combat these crimes, the Puntland government appointed a Commissioner in February 2009 to lead the anti-piracy campaign.

In order to provide a comprehensive and effective response to the problem of piracy, we need assistance in establishing eight coastal stations, with jetties, along the Puntland Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden village centers. These stations will be placed in the following towns and villages, all of which are in Puntland:

- Eyl, Bossaso, Garacad, Las Qorey, Alula, Bargaal, Qandala, and Beila.

We will need equipment at each of these Coastal Task Force stations, which is not limited to: Port Command Centers – Intelligence coordination and surveillance capabilities shared by Puntland Government agencies; Speed Boats and Aircraft; Communications Equipment and Training for the 600 marine force. We will also need to provide incentives for the Coastal Task Force to ensure effectiveness and success.

Also, we must not forget about our natural resource, which is fishing. Prior to the political collapse of Somalia, Puntland had the only three fish-canning factories in Somalia – each vital to our economy. With the restoration of these facilities and by instituting government licensing, residents will increase their income and the Puntland government can track who is fishing off our shores.

The Puntland Government is determined to effectively address the above challenges and find a lasting solution to the instability and criminality posed by the pirates. But we cannot do it alone. The cost of helping Puntland will be far less than what is currently being spent on expensive naval patrols.

The Puntland Government believes that piracy can be effectively tackled through:

1. **Anti-piracy operations by Puntland security forces** with bases inland and along the entire coast to protect the State's marine resources;
2. **Religious scholars leading an educational and spiritual campaign** to discourage new recruits, convince active pirates to quit and help rehabilitate reformed pirates;
3. **Rehabilitate and train former pirates** in employable skills; and
4. **Reinstitute abandoned fishing industry activities** in Puntland to create sustainable livelihoods for the coastal communities.

Foreign warships off the Somali coast cannot fight the pirates alone. It is a fact that pirate attacks are organized on land and therefore targeting pirates on the ground will be a crucial part of the anti-piracy effort, for which Puntland requires assistance. Furthermore, strengthening cooperation between foreign navies and local authorities (especially Puntland) in order to gather and share intelligence, isolate pirate targets and prevent future piracy attacks is instrumental in defeating piracy.

The Puntland Government is committed to fighting and defeating pirates. We need your help.

The Puntland government has jailed over 100 piracy suspects, including convicting and sentencing of 62 pirates. Despite these efforts, there are elements including the media that are waging a negative propaganda campaign to discredit Puntland's anti-piracy efforts. This propaganda is spread by elements that are opposed to the peaceful election in Puntland and our commitment to federalism and playing positive role in regional stability.

It is worth mentioning that the U.S. Government's effort to help Somalia during the civil war years is very commendable and we value your sacrifice. The U.S. Government's policy to help the plight of mass exodus from Somalia by transporting, hosting and accepting Somali refugees fleeing war and famine was a heart-felt humanitarian gesture.

The U.S. Government can help Somalia recover from two decades of instability and violence by taking a leading role of political and economic recovery and strategically addressing the core issues that have kept Somalia embroiled in chaos. This does not and should not involve direct military intervention.

The Puntland Government believes that education and security are inter-linked. Education is the new battleground. We need to re-establish a viable public school system that follows a curriculum that teaches a program of civic competence and responsibility among our young people. This is the only way that we can guarantee a future generation that believes in the values of peace, democracy and freedom.

The vital issues include:

1. **Providing security and development aid** to reinforce Puntland's stable self-government;
2. **Coordinating U.S. Navy anti-piracy effort** on the high seas with the Puntland Government's campaign on the ground to target, isolate and contain piracy; and
3. **Encouraging U.S. Government allies and friendly nations** to conform to this new approach, allowing stakeholders with constituencies to participate at international conferences for Somalia and to ensure fair resource sharing for all administrations.

The following are recommendations for Congress and the U.S. Administration to address the critical situation in Somalia in terms of humanitarian aid delivery, combating extremism and terrorism, and tackling piracy:

1. **Ensure humanitarian aid supply** reaches the needy Somali population fairly – despite the huge displacement population in Puntland, the State receives a low and disproportionate amount of support;
2. **Combat extremist and terrorist elements** spreading throughout Somalia by supporting existing administrations in stable regions in terms of security, development and resource-injection;
3. **Tackle the piracy problem** by coordinating U.S. Navy efforts with ongoing multi-faceted anti-piracy operations in Puntland – Puntland needs support to train, equip and fund the new Coastal Task Force (CTF);

4. **Guarantee a balanced approach** with Somali stakeholders to participate at international conferences and ensure resource-sharing for Somalia;

**Somalia needs federalism.** Just like the United States was formed out of its different states, Somalia must find a balance among its different entities, preserving just authority for each. Genuine federalism demands respect for the facts on the ground. For those authorities that have proven that they can function in a growing democracy, centralism and separation will not work. Puntland seeks to be a model for **stability, prosperity and democracy**. Puntland is committed to a reasonable solution – the only one that will work. **Somalia needs federalism.**

I thank you for your time and for the opportunity to address you. I look forward to answering any questions you may have. Thank you.