

**CENTER FOR
STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

**CONFERENCE ON
SOMALIA'S FUTURE**

**REMARKS BY
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JOHN HAMRE: Thank you. Thank you all for coming. I apologize. We're starting just a little bit early, but Senator Feingold is now Chairman Feingold and he's got a set of responsibilities that are going to take him out of here fairly promptly, so we wanted to begin on time and give a full measure of our attention to his words.

Thank you all for coming. I'm really very pleased to see so many of you. My name is John Hamre. I'm the president here at CSIS. I'm very grateful that you are here and that we can have this conference on Somalia. You know, Washington, for being such a big and sophisticated city, seems to have kind of a one-track mind. We only get on one thing at a time and everything seems to be Iraq. And so, we can't let the other pressing needs of the world go fallow just because we've got another big problem on the horizon.

And I had a privilege of speaking with Senator Feingold this morning on it and to say thank you to him for keeping national attention on an issue that would otherwise disappear in Washington. So, Senator, I really do mean it; without your leadership, this entire country wouldn't be focusing on this problem. And we're really grateful. And it's not just – just not a temporary, recent phenomenon. Senator Feingold has been, probably, without doubt, one of the leading intellectuals in the Senate who has been watching Africa closely for years and has dedicated a lot of time. I think it was about a year ago, even here at the CSIS when he first spoke on Somalia and the need for not just military solutions in Somalia. So we're very grateful that you've come back today, Senator. Thank you.

Let me just say a word of thanks to our colleagues today: David Smock with USIP – I just lost my pen – Princeton Lyman, of course, with CFR. Princeton, thank you; you've been a great friend of us here; and, of course, Howard Wolpe, one of the great leaders here on things Africa. We're delighted you're here.

This is going to be a very important session. We are very grateful that you have all made the time to be here. I think this is a time when America has an opportunity, you know, if it gets its focus. And, it's going to come from a session like this and with leaders like you.

Senator, we're delighted you're here. Let's not wait longer. Let's hear from you. Senator Russell Feingold, we're delighted to have you.

(Applause.)

SENATOR RUSSELL FEINGOLD (D-WI): Good morning and thank you, Dr. Hamre. I really appreciate not only the kind words but the way you introduced me in terms in of what I call the Iraq-centric nature of our foreign policy. We don't need to get into all the feelings people have about that except to say that this is one of the central

problems with our foreign policy, is that we tend to look at the one place and think that that's what we're going to deal with that day, and then move onto other places later as if they aren't all interrelated. And you just solve one problem; it doesn't have effects in other places.

And I met with a very distinguished American diplomat recently who said, gee, I hear Somalia's going to be the new Afghanistan. And I felt like saying, no. Afghanistan is different. Somalia is different. Iraq is different, but they are all interrelated. And by solving one or terminating our involvement in one place, you don't necessarily deal with the other issues. I think that's a critical point, and it's one the – I've been interested in Somalia and Africa prior to all these events after 9/11, but, certainly, what drives me in large part is the need to protect American national security by having the right kind of policy with regard to Somalia and other places in that region.

I appreciate the work that CIS has done to bring together a great group of people today and for your continued leadership on many of the challenges facing the African continent. Steve Morrison and Jennifer Cook, thank you for your continued efforts to create substantive, focused discussion on this issue. You've provided a valuable forum for this discussion.

Let me also recognize and thank Dr. Dick Solomon, the president of the U.S. Institute of Peace, who I understand is not here, but also Ambassador Princeton Lyman from the Council on Foreign Relations, and Dr. Howard Wolpe, former congressman and longtime leader on issues relating to U.S. engagement in Africa. I have benefited over the years from both of these gentlemen's advice and educating me on issues relating to Africa. We have an incredible amount of experience in this room. So to all of you, again, thank you for putting this together and thank you for coming today.

This really is a critical time and I'm glad that so many dedicated people have decided to spend the day working on what has become one of the toughest issues we're facing in Africa. Like everyone here, I am very concerned about recent developments in Somalia.

Now, so you know, as was mentioned, I've been working on issues relating to Somalia on and off for all 14 years of my time in the United States Senate. I've been on the Africa subcommittee every day that I've been a United States Senator. In fact, the very first question I every received after I was elected, even before I was sworn in, standing in front of my garage door – (laughter) – in the cold in Wisconsin, was not about the deficit, was not about health care, was not about the environment; it was about, what do you think about President Bush's idea of sending troops into Somalia? This is before I'd taken the oath of office, that's how far back it goes.

So, this is a matter that I'm very interested in. And now, standing here in front of you as the incoming chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Africa, I'm hoping that we can make an aggressive, sustained effort to bring about a real transition to peace in Somalia. But while there have been a few positive developments in

the last few weeks, like the transitional federal government returning to Mogadishu, it is far too soon to suggest that Somalia is on a stable path towards peace. Much more needs to be done to establish the conditions that can actually lead to a lasting peace. In fact, it has become increasingly evident that we only have a small and, I think, a quickly closing window of opportunity to act.

First, we only have a limited amount of time establish the conditions that will lead to political stability in Somalia. That means establishing a political framework that will help the TFG, transitional federal government, create a government that is actually capable of representing and providing security and services to the Somali people.

Ethiopia's military incursions, starting on December 24th, initially changed the security and political dynamics on the ground, and, of course, did enable the TFG to enter Mogadishu. Unfortunately, the TFG is already running the risk of missing a critical window to establish itself as a credible, transparent and representative government. Recent media reports from Mogadishu highlight how difficult it has been for the TFG to prove its legitimacy.

The Ethiopian military presence in Somalia, too, presents a very significant challenge. While a sustained Ethiopian military presence in Somalia will have a destabilizing effect, of course it's also true in the dilemmas that we're in right now, that a withdrawal could also create a dangerous condition of the kind that sort of lead to the Islamic courts emerging in the first place. It really is an unfortunate dilemma. Such a withdrawal by the Ethiopians could perpetuate the interests of warlords and the hard-line extremists within the Islamic Court if, if there is no security force capable of securing Mogadishu and the rest of the country.

Now, I met with Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi in early December in Addis Ababa, a few weeks before he launched the military incursion. I cautioned him against taking these steps. At the time, he expressed his concern about timing and how his country's military could sustain operations and expressed to me that it would be a brief incursion. Now, the Ethiopian military appears eager to withdraw, and if they do so, we may face certain consequences that would be troubling.

This leads to another critical timing issue. Without the deployment of a follow-on peacekeeping force of some sort, Ethiopia's eventual withdrawal could, of course, mean great difficulty for the transitional federal government and the people of Somalia.

I want to be clear: I consider the Ethiopian presence there to be problematic either way, whether they stay or whether they leave, and this is something that we have got to figure out, and the only way to do it is not simply by posing whether the Ethiopians stay or leave, but what we put in its place, what we make sure is on the ground and working.

And at this point, the Ugandans have warily agreed to send upwards of 1,500 Ugandan soldiers into Somalia, but their deployment could take weeks that Ethiopians

may not want to spend waiting around. And 1,500 soldiers, in the most optimistic assessment, is a woefully inadequate force to counter the major challenges to this fragile government and to a political reconciliation process.

But these are only a few of my concerns. I'm also concerned about how the United States government has responded to developments in Somalia. While the situation on the ground is increasingly complex and tense, our response, or lack thereof, to developments in a key region suggests that our government is still trying to figure out how to address failed states, terrorist safe havens, instability and regional conflict. I intend to take a hard look now in my subcommittee in the coming year at past actions and how we can equip our government to better handle situations like this.

As you know, a recent report said terrorists and hard-line members of the Islamic Courts in Somalia are on the run and capturing headlines. Pentagon and State Department officials have said that a U.S. military aircraft targeted what they believe to be al Qaeda operatives who have harbored by the Islamic Courts last week.

Most of the coverage in Somalia in the past few weeks, in fact, has been almost exclusively related to these counter-terrorism efforts. As a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, I am limited in what I can say publicly about this, but I think we can all agree that now, more than ever, Somalia's instability matters to the region and to our own national security.

So we cannot conceive of the situation in Somalia only as a manhunt. Although the manhunt is legitimate and these people need to be brought to justice, to only think of this in terms of a manhunt and then the job is done is not a policy and is not consistent with protecting the American people from future terrorist attacks.

We know well the consequences of allowing lawlessness and chaos to take over in Somalia. Over the past several years, lawlessness in Somalia has spread into Kenya and Ethiopia and had been convenient for illicit and underground organizations that do business on the black market worldwide. Somalia has also long been a refuge for terrorists, including, as I alluded to, three individuals suspected in the 1998 bombings of the U.S. Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Targeting terrorists is important, but it's not enough. In fact, if we just focus on that, we risk a significant backlash that could actually hurt our efforts to establish stability in Somalia and our broader regional efforts. Counter-terrorism efforts must be accompanied by a broader political and diplomatic strategy for the Horn of Africa. Al Qaeda leaders have made clear that they see instability in Somalia as an opportunity to extend their influence.

Accordingly, the United States needs to address that instability so al Qaeda can't use Somalia as another staging ground from which to harm America. If we don't, that country will remain what it was been since the early 1990s: a haven for terrorists and warlords and a source of crippling instability in a critical region.

So what we need – what we need is a comprehensive stabilization and reconstruction strategy that will bring lasting peace to Somalia and the region. Unfortunately, this strategy has yet to be developed. A bipartisan group of senators supported my effort last year to require the administration to put this comprehensive strategy together. We passed a provision in Congress that was signed by the president in November. That strategy was actually due yesterday and my staff was informed that the State Department has yet to comply.

This administration needs to establish a framework within which it can develop key priorities and objectives for Somalia as well as more effective collaboration with the international community and the region. We've seen in other parts of the world what a mistake it is to make decisions without the benefit of a vision or a strategy or a plan. I want our government to avoid making bad or rash decisions or, worse than that, no decisions at all. And I want to ensure that our approach to Somalia takes into consideration the complex nature of the problem and the need to view Somalia comprehensively, not solely through a military focused counter-terrorism lens.

We know that Somalia's weak transitional government has a challenging road ahead to establish itself as the representative government for the people of Somalia. By all accounts, Somalis have not rallied behind that government. In fact, a recent L.A. Times article highlighted the fact that gun prices in Mogadishu are apparently rising because of steep demand. And many of the warlords, who have long used Mogadishu and other parts of Somalia as their personal and violent fiefdoms are moving freely around the country. The hard-line extremists have receded into Somalia's sandy landscape, but Somalis' anarchic tendencies still remain unchallenged and unchanged.

So let me talk about what I think we and the international community needs to do. The United States should take at least three critical steps to bring stability to Somalia in the coming weeks and months. These steps are not linear or sequential. I've learned that when dealing with Somalia it doesn't necessarily help to lay things out in a completely sequential fashion. (Laughter.) These steps are all interrelated and mutually reinforcing. And unfortunately, without just one of these key elements – we don't have all three – then efforts to stabilize Somalia could be severely hindered.

First, the United States needs ramp up diplomatic efforts to build support for a robust international peacekeeping force that can deploy to Somalia. It will be impossible for Somalis to begin the tough work of strengthening a central government if there is no security. And an international peacekeeping force could help stabilize the country until the transitional government can stand up its own security forces. While I recognize that this move could be controversial, I don't really see that we have a choice. We must move quickly to ensure that Ethiopia's military incursion isn't just another chapter in Somalia's tumultuous history.

While Ethiopia may have won a tactical success in Somalia, it failed to deliver a strategic victory because no one, not the international community nor Ethiopia itself, was

prepared for the consequences of that they did. The United States will need to help in deploying these peacekeeping forces, not necessarily with our troops, but with airlift and logistical support and training. This force will need a clear mandate and the capability to bring about stability throughout the country and it will need far more than the brave Ugandan troops who may apparently soon be on their way to Somalia.

Second, and maybe most importantly, the United States must work vigorously with Somalis, regional players, and the international community to help the Somalis create an inclusive national government. The transitional federal charter, signed by numerous Somali clans and tribes in 2004, may start or serve as a starting point or reference. But because a lot has changed and because some portions of Somali society have reportedly rejected it as a governing document, it will need, probably, to be revisited.

While America's record isn't perfect, we have experience working with complex and ethnic or tribal-based political systems around the world from Bosnia to Afghanistan to Liberia. Without a political solution, no peacekeeping force will be capable of bringing about stability in Somalia and no government will be capable of cobbling together a political coalition with the legitimacy to lead the country forward. And, we'll be left, again, with the same conditions that have benefited warlords and al Qaeda.

We need to support this effort vigorously. We need to increase our diplomatic capability to deal with Somalia. This represents a critical challenge to how our government is organized and we need to get it right. We need to put some of our best minds on the problem, both here in Washington and in the field. This is complicated work. And we also need a senior-level envoy to work on it fulltime. Dispatching a U.S. special envoy, and quickly, would help elevate our ability to deal with these multi-faceted political issues and help rally and coordinate international efforts.

Now, third, and to help facilitate the previous two elements, the United States needs to kick-start Somalia's stabilization and reconstruction efforts by creating a significant trust fund that will help the Somali government get down to the business of governing. This fund will be needed to support disarmament and demobilization efforts, infrastructure projects, capacity building and jobs creation, and to help rebuild Somalia's decrepit infrastructure. It will also be needed to help develop the rule of law and security forces that respect human rights.

We can also learn from the reconstruction efforts undertaken by the United States and the international community in Afghanistan and Lebanon and Kosovo. Because Somalia's institutions are so weak and the needs of its people so great, it is key that donor countries, the United Nations, and non-governmental organizations contribute to stabilization efforts. We need these organizations to coordinate their work to make sure that every dollar is used to help the people of Somalia and not be inadvertently diverted to prop up parochial and destabilizing interests.

So I think these are the three big areas we need to move on immediately. There are other important areas, too. As we've seen around the world, efforts like this are complex. They take large sums of money and time and patience, and if this is going to work, it's going to have to be significant in size. But, we do have an opportunity to this right and to do it in a way that is comprehensive. And that is where I believe Congress comes in.

Senator Norm Coleman and I are working on a bill right now to address these major areas that I just mentioned, but our colleagues in Congress should understand that the window of opportunity to affect change in Somalia is closing. The coming months are a time for action, to authorize and appropriate funds, to conduct rigorous oversight to ensure that this administration takes a balanced and comprehensive approach and to authorize activities that will help our government and the international community organize effectively to address instability in Somalia.

The price tag will be significant. So, too, will be the risk of failure if we don't act. Previous U.S. attempts to resolve the competing and violent dynamics in Somalia have failed. We Americans cannot forget that. But we cannot allow our past to overshadow the pressing security concerns we face in the region today. We have an opportunity. We have an opportunity to help the Somali people dig themselves out of almost two decades of chaos and to strengthen U.S. national security at the same time. But if our government does move quickly and aggressively on all fronts, we can be sure Somalia will continue to be a haven for terrorist networks and a source of instability that poses a direct threat to the United States.

Let me close by saying this: I hope that all of you use today as an opportunity to share and revise ideas and options and lessons and analysis that will help the United States and the international community contribute to stabilizing Somalia. I also hope that you start with the premise that the United States can do more. And while I urge you to be thorough and to be open about past failures, I'd hope that you look forward and help us establish momentum for what promises to be a long trip.

Finally, I urge you to think big. Your work here at this conference will help set the tone and the pace for how we move forward and, ideally, we'll help the people of Somalia and the security of the American people as well.

Thanks for having me.

(Applause.)

MR. HAMRE: Thank you, Senator. After a 13-year hiatus of actively ignoring Somalia and Somalia occupying a sort of phobic position within our own foreign policy with very negative connotations, it's refreshing to hear such a positive, forward-looking, and cogent presentation. And I think we've entered a new debate and you've helped us open that and set us on a direction for this and your call to think big is quite welcome and we will take that up very seriously.

The senator has a few minutes to field comments and questions. What I would like to ask you to do is put your hand up there. We have folks with microphones. Please identify yourself, limit yourself to one question, and one minute and we will bundle together four or five quick comments and questions and return to the senator. Would you like to open, please?

Q: Sure.

MR. HAMRE: We have microphones.

Q: Good morning, Senator.

SEN. FEINGOLD: Good morning.

Q: Thank you. My name is Was Wakdow (ph). I'm with Al Jazeera T.V.

What makes you think now is the right time to be involved in Somalia? The U.S. seems to be not at its best shape internationally and it seems like most of the proposals or the three points that you have mentioned depend on international support. What makes you think that now is the best time?

SEN. FEINGOLD: Well, we – excuse me.

MR. HAMRE: (Off mike.) – go ahead, Senator.

SEN. FEINGOLD: We have no choice but to be involved at this time. And the lesson of not only Somalia, but Afghanistan in the past is that when we have withdrawn from a situation, militarily, we have withdrawn hook, line, and sinker to the point where we don't even have a policy, and it leads to terrible problems.

So if we're really interested in stability in this region, if we're really interested in having coordinated effort throughout the world to stop al Qaeda and to change our reputation in much of the Islamic world, then this is the time to show the world that we want to work in a constructive way to bring peace to Somalia, to have a representative government, and that we will put dollars – help put dollars behind making that happen. That is how improve our image and also protect our security at the same time. To ignore Somalia at this point is simply to ignore our own national security and our chance to make a very different impression in the world.

MR. HAMRE: Thank you. Additional questions? We have one over here.

Q: I'm Maya Soble, London School of Economics.

One of the things you mentioned that we need to do is build diplomatic support from an international peacekeeping force. I'm just wondering, practically speaking, how

do you see the successful formation of such a force given the existing forces and calls for forces in other places like the Sudan, Iraq, Lebanon, et cetera? In other words, at what point is this solution of the international peacekeeping force stretched thin?

SEN. FEINGOLD: Well, there are great pressures on it, but given my work in Africa, I've seen a willingness of African countries to participate in providing troops. It needs to be more than Ugandans. It needs to not be people from neighboring countries or people whose ability to be neutral would be questioned. But perhaps West African countries and others still have a capacity to provide additional troops. So I would look first to that resource and I do believe that the African countries, with our help and encouragement, will help provide the additional troops that will be necessary.

Q: (Off mike.)

SEN. FEINGOLD: Yes, of course. The Darfur situation is also a problem and that relates to the resistance of the Khartoum government. I don't think that has to do with a lack of troops or ability to get troops; it has to do with resistance on the part of the government. I don't see that as being the same problem in Somalia.

MR. HAMRE: (Off mike.) Sir, please identify yourself.

Q: My name is Abdullah Said Osman. I'm a diplomat in residence at the Institute at Conflict Analysis and Resolution of George Mason University. I will propose two questions.

MR. HAMRE: No, one question. (Laughter.) One minute; one question.

Q: Okay. So in that case, I have to more or less look at the priority of the two questions that would have asked. I will focus on the one at this time. The most important thing – or rather, the most important issue that needs to be addressed seems to be question of mobilization of resources in order to help and assist Somalia. Somalia has been for the past 15 years, without a government.

And I think there is a need for peace building for institutions, for institutional building, capacity building, and there are all institutions, and recently there was this Joint Needs Assessment Program that has been worked out by the World Bank and the United Nations and UNDP – in fact, last year. And I was one of the participants of that program and I was, in fact, assisting in laying down the framework for government and the rule of law.

And we came up with substantive documentation. And these documentation were suppose to be submitted to a – (inaudible) – conference, which was suppose to be held in Rome. But there was no response from the international community. And that particular conference that was suppose to be held, up to now, has not been convened. I just want to ask you, Senator, as to whether, for example, there is a need for a new chapter,

particularly in regards to the response or in regard to the response of the international community?

SEN. FEINGOLD: I hope that –

Q: In order to mobilize the resources.

SEN. FEINGOLD: I hope that what was implicit in my call for this press fund was exactly that. And I'm not talking here only about our resources. Our resources from the United States has to be increased. And, sir, I am known as one of the toughest spending hawks – deficit hawks in the United States Senate. But I am here to tell you we need to do this.

We're spending \$8 billion a week in Iraq, in a place where al Qaeda wasn't in the first place, and we can't even increase over \$40 million, which we're doing now, with regards to Somalia. We're just not thinking clearly. Now, this also involves the international community. And I've already met with some of our EU partners, both in Addis Ababa, and in my office and we have talked about the need for resources. And yes, I would call on all countries of the world that care about stability in that region and that care about the threats that can emerge from that region if we don't act to not just talk, not just meet, but to contribute to such an effort.

MR. HAMRE: Ma'am, right here in the front row. Please identify yourself. There's a microphone there for you.

Q: Hi, I'm Shipley Adams (sp) from Resolving and Understanding Conflict in Minnesota.

And my question is that the Somalis in the diaspora and the ones in Africa know that the wall of – and the group of Somalis that are in the government, the transitional government right now. How do we oversight the spending that will be used for reconstruction in Somalia because that is one of the great motivators of fighting that's still ongoing?

SEN FEINGOLD: That's a very important question. And I don't know if you notice that I mentioned in my comments that this – one of the reasons you create a trust fund with accountability, with standards, with oversight is we do not want these funds to go to people who either will waste it, or worse yet, use it to destabilize. So this is implicit and inherent in this call for greater funds because we know that mistakes have been made in this way in the past. So I think that's a fair point and everybody needs to be accountable on this. People in the TFG and others – whoever gets the resources, there needs to be strict accountability.

MR. HAMRE: We have room for one more question. This gentleman right here has been waiting very patiently. Thank you.

Q: Thank you. Senator Feingold, Chairman Feingold –

MR. HAMRE: Please identify yourself.

Q: Oh, my name's Abraham Mohammed (sp). I'm one of the Somalia Jasper Network.

Senator, whenever you speak or mention Somalia, we call each other – e-mail each other – Senator Feingold said this. (Laughter.) We want to thank you, thank you from the Somali community. Someone – (inaudible) – us asking more favors. I hope more favor will come from you in Somalia first.

You mentioned that you need to fund the TFG, the transitional government, in order for Somalia to work. In the past, the U.S. government funded a warlord that had ravaged the country and then gave rise to Somali Kurds. We also know U.S. government fund Ethiopian government in other to operate in Somalia. The U.S. government supported the invasion of the Ethiopian government. What makes you think funding this government, at this makeup will make any difference?

SEN. FEINGOLD: Now, my proposal is not to, quote, "fund" this government. My proposal is that we help fund a reconstruction including a government that actually represents all the people. So the TFG, as it now stands, as it now exists by itself without true reconciliation/representation should not be a recipient of all these dollars. This has to do with a comprehensive plan. And let me just say, the policies you just identified that the United States has filed, you're accurate and they've been wrong. They've been either wrong or consensually nonexistent. And it is time for us to have a different approach. That's why I've suggested these three things. But I want to be very clear: The one thing I guarantee I'm not proposing is some kind of blank check for the TFG. They have got to clean up their act and they've got to show that they are legitimate in order to make this work. Thank so much for having me here.

(Applause.)

(END)