

Rebuild Somalia To Undercut Warlords

David Shinn is a former U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia, and in his 37 years with the State Department, he also served as the director of East and Horn of African Affairs. He is now an adjunct professor in the Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University. He was interviewed by Lawrence Freeman on Jan. 4, 2007, at a Washington, D.C. forum on Somalia, sponsored by the Middle East Institute. This was before the U.S. attacks took place in southern Somalia.



EIR: Ambassador Shinn, now that the Ethiopian military moved into Mogadishu and the Islamic Court has left, what do you think the course for stability is in the immediate period ahead?

Shinn: First, it's important to clarify that the Islamic Courts per se have not left Mogadishu. What has left is the militia that supported the Islamic Courts. Allegedly, about 3,000 of them went to the southern part of Somalia, and are still being tracked down in that area. I think many of the 3,000 actually have since abandoned their weapons and their uniforms and are trying to meld back into society.

But what you have left in Mogadishu are the Islamic Courts, as represented by some of the religious leaders, and some of the followers, most of whom were fairly moderate, and it's essentially the extremists who ended up departing. What happens next? Basically, it's a question of the Transitional Federal Government, which at least for now controls Mogadishu—and much of the rest of the country—to reach out to all of those elements of Somali society. This means the clans that feel they have not been sufficiently represented in the transitional Federal government; the moderates in the Islamic Courts; the members of civil society who have not played a particularly important role in the transitional federal government. They have to be brought in, and made to feel that they are part of the system.

You also have to deal with some of the former warlords. The Transitional Federal Government (TFG) is a coalition itself. It does include some former warlords. But it also

excluded some others. And one way or the other, the TFG has to deal with those who at this point are not part of the TFG. To use a harsh word, it either has to coopt, or it has to otherwise deal with them, and this is not going to be an easy task.

EIR: So, you don't think that stability can proceed without inclusion of some of what you would call the moderates of the Islamic Courts?

Shinn: Among others. It's not just the Islamic Courts, but it's all of these other elements. I think that's correct. I think that the only government that's going to be acceptable, will be one that is basically all-inclusive, with, of course, the exception of extremists. There's simply no room for extremists in the government.

EIR: What role do you think the Ethiopians have, and how long do you think they'll be staying there militarily? Because that would seem to be a fly in the ointment of trying to work any of this out.

Shinn: If the Ethiopians overstay their welcome, it will indeed be a fly in the ointment, and I think they are aware of that, frankly, better than anyone. Prime Minister Meles has said that he would like to see the Ethiopian engagement in Somalia only to be a matter of weeks. It's actually Prime Minister [Ali Mohamed] Geddi of the Transitional Federal Government who was talking about maybe months in having the Ethiopians remain. Well, that's because he may feel he needs them for security purposes.

Now, this will be a delicate dance between the Transitional Federal Government and the Ethiopians, as to when the Ethiopians leave. And I think you're actually going to see the Ethiopians wanting to leave sooner, than some in the TFG want them to leave. But it is essential that they leave quickly. Otherwise, it will create a whole new set of problems. . . .

EIR: What do you see in terms of the potential danger for asymmetric warfare in Somalia, and the spread of this to the whole region?

Shinn: At the moment I'm a little bit less concerned about that, depending, of course, upon how you define asymmetrical warfare. If you're defining it as the former extremists, or the extremists who were formerly a part of the Islamic Courts, and who are now on the run in southern Somalia, and that they would regroup and somehow carry out terrorist attacks, or bombings, or the IED kind of activity that we've seen in Iraq and Afghanistan, frankly I'm really less concerned about that than I am about simply a return to old-fashioned warlord politics in places like Mogadishu. I really don't think that these folks have the kind of support required to carry that kind of activity out. This is not the Somali way of doing things.

Admittedly there were some bombings in Baidoa Some-

one either taught the elements of the Courts how to do it, or foreigners did it; it's not clear who carried it out. But there weren't very many. And I would be very surprised if Somalis accept this as a way of doing business in their country. I think those elements will be basically prevented from carrying out that kind of warfare. And as I said, to me the greater threat is a return to warlord politics, especially in Mogadishu.

EIR: What do you think is the major positive role that the U.S. could play in this area?

Shinn: To have a very low profile, first off, politically to have a low profile. Security-wise, to have a low profile. And then, most importantly, to step up and be helpful in terms of helping to reconstruct Somalia, the infrastructure and the social system, as soon as security permits that.

Now admittedly, today that's really not possible. It's certainly not possible to have Americans running around Somalia. But eventually, it will be possible to finance that kind of activity, either using Somalis themselves predominantly, or perhaps security will return to the point where even small numbers of Americans can go in and supervise those kinds of activity.

Or, as a last resort, one can simply work through the United Nations, and make it more of a United Nations effort, with the United States providing their fair share, of funding. But it really is critical to start rebuilding Somalia to the point where Somalis themselves are not attracted to either ideology or warlords—or beliefs that are rather contrary to their history—and where they're rather willing to support a national government which is, in theory, looking out for their best interests as a people.

EIR: You talked about the development. This area is extremely underdeveloped. Do you have any concrete ideas? Are you talking about water management, energy development? What kind of programs do you think could be implemented? What kind of effect do you think they would have over what period of time?

Shinn: Well, in the first instance, you have to do what one should give the Islamic Courts credit for, and that was to reopen the airport and the ports. They had been closed since UNOSOM [United Nations forces] left in 1995; the Courts reopened them several months ago. They briefly closed again when this recent fighting broke out. I see that the TFG has announced that the airport has reopened; I don't know if planes are flying in or not. But you've got to restart commerce. Somalis are very good at commerce, and if the possibility is there to conduct commerce, they will do it. But they can't do it if the ports are closed, and the airports are closed.

The next step is to start working on road infrastructure, which means rebuilding, not only in Mogadishu but outside of Mogadishu, so that commerce can function more effec-

tively throughout the country, so that you can restart the export of bananas from the Shabelle or the Juba valleys, where they used to grow in great abundance. And where you can start exporting livestock again—that is, livestock on the hoof—which used to be the single largest export of Somalia.

All of these things are going to require outside assistance, in order to make them work. And then, at the same time, you've got to work on education and health systems. Some of these have continued to function throughout all of this conflict in Somalia, mainly done by the private sector, or simply committed Somalis who banded together to make some things happen. And the Islamic Courts did some good with that also.

The Somalis, together with foreigners, have to come together to figure out, or to begin a way to start reconstructing this part of Somalia, which has so lapsed into disrepair.

EIR: Do you think there are positive tendencies in this current Administration, or even potentially this new Congress, that would undertake that kind of funding for infrastructure projects?

Shinn: I think there is. And I think if you look at the committees in both the House and the Senate, with Donald Payne leading the Africa subcommittee in the House, and

EIR SPECIAL REPORTS

Peace through Development in Africa's Great Lakes Region: Proceedings of A Seminar in Walluf, Germany

The 148-page report incorporates the proceedings of a seminar addressed by Lyndon LaRouche and sponsored by *EIR*, the Schiller Institute, and the Forum for Peace and Democracy, in Walluf, Germany on April 26-27, 1997. An extensive appendix details infrastructure projects which would spur the development of Africa.

\$100

148 pages Order# EIR 97-003

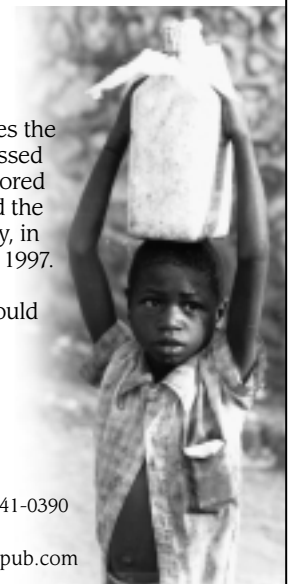
ORDER FROM . . .

EIR News Service, Inc.

P.O. Box 17390 Washington, D.C. 20041-0390

Or toll-free phone 1-800-278-3135

Order online at <http://www.larouchepub.com>



with Russ Feingold leading the Africa subcommittee in the Senate, I personally know that both of those individuals, have a deep interest in Somalia; that they have called out, for some time now, particularly Russ Feingold, for a comprehensive policy to deal with Somalia, not one based solely on counterterrorism. And I think you will certainly see a desire from Capitol Hill to move in that direction, at least at the committee level. I don't have any feel for how broad-based that will be in the House and the Senate, more generally. It will be up to people like Payne and Feingold to create an enthusiasm for that.

And on the Administration side, I think that there are significant elements of the Administration that understand that you can't have a policy based solely on counterterrorism. There are other elements to it. And, in all fairness to the Administration, it has been the most active country in the world in providing emergency food aid to Somalia, ever since the United States left in 1994. In the year 2006 alone, it provided more than \$90 million worth of food aid, for a combination of, first drought, and then floods, in Somalia—far more than any other country provided.

EIR: Finally, some of the panelists today at this forum which we attended, and you spoke at, didn't really have a very long-term positive view. It seems to me that they discussed that the best we can do right now, was "mending and bandaids." I want to know if you share that view, and what kind of bandaids and mending you think is going to work?

Shinn: Well, when you look at the history of Somalia since 1991, that was almost a positive approach to the problem. Like Gayle Smith [former National Security Council official], I tend to be something of an optimist. When you've been in diplomacy for 37 years, if you're a pessimist, quite frankly you should have gotten out at year one. Otherwise you're in the wrong business. Because you're doomed to fail, if you start from a negative approach.

So, I am cautiously optimistic that this can be made to work, but there are so many possibilities along the way that to make a misstep, to mess it all up, that is to me the most worrying factor. And it's going to take a brilliant display of diplomacy by the Transitional Federal Government to pull this together, and it's going to take an enormous amount of support from the international community to assist them, once the security problem is resolved. And it's not really resolved yet. The international community will be very limited in what it can do until they're assured that they can work in Somalia, and not be harmed in the process.

EIR: Do you think that they'll bring in an old hand like yourself from the Horn of Africa to help out?

Shinn: I'm sure not, and at this point, I'm better at talking heads than I am at going back and doing it. I'm involved in researching and well-ensconced in Washington; I did my stint in the field, and am probably too old for that now.