

Somalia

After more than a decade-long hiatus, peacekeepers returned to Somalia in 2007. This followed the ouster of the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) by the Transitional Federal Institutions (TFI), with military support from Ethiopia. While the Ethiopian intervention quickly restored a measure of authority to the TFI, and made way for the partial deployment of the AU Mission in Sudan (AMISOM) in March 2007, the security vacuum that followed plunged Somalia back into chaos. Throughout the year, a dispersed and disaffected UIC functioned as a heavily armed and active insurgency, while a widespread humanitarian crisis loomed large and a multitude of divergent external interests converged in what looked like a proxy war. During the year in review there was little peace to keep in Somalia, and the restoration of stability seemed unlikely, absent a shift in both international engagement and the national reconciliation process. The situation was aggravated by power struggles between TFI president Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed and Prime Minister Ali Mohamed Gedi that culminated in the resignation of Gedi on 29 October 2007.

Background

After his election in October 2004, Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed appealed to the international community for a multinational peacekeeping force of up to 20,000 troops to restore security in the country and enable his institution's return from exile to Mogadishu, the capital. The request was eventually supported by the AU in early 2005 and then by the UN Security Council. The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) agreed to take the lead in

AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)

• Authorization Date	19 January 2007 (AU PSC/PRI Comm. LXIX); 6 December 2006 (UNSC Res. 1725)
• Start Date	March 2007
• Strength as of 30 September 2007	Troops: 1,600

establishing a peace support mission, which was approved by the AU in February 2005.

However, local groups in Somalia, including the UIC, immediately expressed their opposition to the deployment of peacekeepers, especially those from neighboring countries. An initial AU assessment mission in February 2005 was met with violent protests. The Security Council cautioned that any peace support mission “would require the support of the Somali people,” while IGAD promised not to include troops from the neighboring states of Ethiopia, Kenya, or Djibouti in the proposed mission.

IGAD authorized its Peace Support Mission in Somalia (IGASOM) in April 2005 with a mandate for robust “peace enforcement.” The concept of operations was approved by the transitional parliament and authorized by the AU in May 2005. On 13 September 2006, the AU’s Peace and Security Council approved the deployment plan of IGASOM: 8,000 troops to provide security for the TFI and create an environment conducive to inclusive dialogue and reconciliation. Deployment was not legally feasible until December 2006, when the UN Security Council amended its long-standing

arms embargo on Somalia with Resolution 1725. The altered embargo authorized IGAD and AU states to establish a “protection and training mission” in Somalia, where neighboring states, including Ethiopia, would be prohibited from contributing troops to the mission.

Meanwhile, throughout 2006 the UIC embarked on a broad campaign against a loose association of secular warlords, asserting its jurisdiction over the majority of Somalia’s south, including Mogadishu, and imposing Islamic *sharia* on the bulk of the Somali population by October 2006. While this campaign was conducted in a largely nonviolent manner—returning a level of stability to the country not seen since the late 1980s—the UIC’s alleged connection to organized terror groups, especially Al-Qaida, drew the attention of neighbors and the international community, in particular Ethiopia and the United States.

In December 2006, Ethiopia, citing national security interests as its impetus, began strongly supporting the TFI with troops and equipment, and eventually engaged the UIC in open combat. Ethiopian forces swiftly defeated the UIC, causing its dissolution by 27 December. The victory, however, was superficial, as remaining UIC elements quickly assimilated into the general population, creating chaos over much of the country’s territory and restricting TFI control to the borders of Mogadishu.

Major Developments

As quickly as the UIC had fallen, talk of Ethiopian withdrawal began in early 2007. In January, the AU’s Peace and Security Council authorized deployment of AMISOM to support the TFI in restoring stability to the country. The UN Security Council endorsed AMISOM the following month and the force began deploying in March. But efforts to deploy the 8,000-strong AU force have been painfully slow. In fact, by October, only one contributor, Uganda, had deployed troops, approximately 1,600. Several countries—Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, and Burundi—all pledged troops, but as the

year came to a close only Burundi had begun deploying. Ethiopian troops remained in country at the end of 2007, despite opposition to their presence by some local Somali groups, most notably the defunct UIC.

The AU peacekeepers have been targeted by insurgents, and have been largely confined to Mogadishu. As in the past, the country is awash in weapons reportedly supplied by various regional players, further complicating peacekeeping efforts. Scores of civilians have been displaced by the violence, with severe humanitarian consequences. Consequently, AU chairperson Alpha Omar Konare appealed to the UN to provide assistance to AMISOM along the lines of the Light and Heavy Support packages it provided to the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS). Acting on the request, in August 2007 the Security Council called on the Secretary-General to begin exploring options for the possible deployment of UN troops to Somalia. Reporting to the Security Council in early November, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, however, questioned the feasibility of deploying a UN peace operation in Somalia, and ultimately urged the international community to consider other options.

Progress toward an inclusive political framework followed a similarly difficult trajectory during the year. A six-week national reconciliation conference—delayed three times because of threats of violence, but finally convened on 15 July 2007—was deemed largely insignificant due to the glaring absence of the dominant Hawiye clan. At a rival conference held in the Eritrean capital, Asmara, in September, members of the dissolved UIC met and pledged to oust the TFI and its Ethiopian backers under the newly established Alliance for the Liberation of Somalia, a move that many observers saw as a call for increased insurgent activity.

As the year drew to a close, prospects for stability in Somalia remained bleak in the absence of either concerted efforts to reconcile the varied and competing national groups vying for control of the country, or the full deployment of a robust peacekeeping force.