



Highlights of [GAO-08-351](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

Somalia has lacked a functioning central government since 1991. In December 2006, the Ethiopian military intervened in Somalia to support Somalia's transitional government, opening what many considered a window of opportunity to rebuild the country and restore effective governance. The United States has been the largest bilateral donor to Somalia, providing roughly \$362 million in assistance since 2001. In this report, GAO assesses (1) U.S. and international efforts to stabilize Somalia, (2) U.S. and international efforts to provide humanitarian and development assistance to Somalia, and (3) strategic planning efforts to guide U.S. activities related to Somalia. GAO reviewed documents from U.S. and international organizations; interviewed U.S., United Nations (UN), Somali, and other officials; and conducted fieldwork in Kenya and Ethiopia. GAO assessed U.S. strategy using the six desirable characteristics of an effective national strategy that GAO previously developed.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of State, in conjunction with the Secretary of Defense and the National Security Advisor, develop a more detailed strategy for Somalia, to include the full range of U.S. government activities in the region and all six characteristics of an effective national strategy. The Department of Defense (DOD) partially concurred with GAO's recommendation, while State did not directly respond to it.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-351](#). For more information, contact Thomas Melito at (202) 512-9601 or melitot@gao.gov.

SOMALIA

Several Challenges Limit U.S. and International Stabilization, Humanitarian, and Development Efforts

What GAO Found

Several challenges have limited U.S. and international efforts to stabilize Somalia. The international community, including the United States, is seeking to improve the security situation in the country, mainly by funding an African Union peacekeeping operation. However, a shortage of troops has hindered peacekeepers' ability to achieve their mission. In addition, the most recent attempt at political reconciliation was limited, in part because several important opposition groups were not involved. For example, while this key attempt resulted in resolutions to end the conflict and return all property to its rightful owners, these opposition groups denounced the resolutions, citing their lack of participation in drafting them. According to many officials, Somalia's Transitional Federal Government lacks institutional structures and national acceptance, and these weaknesses, in our view, have constrained U.S. and international efforts to establish the transitional government as a fully functioning central government. To mitigate these challenges, the international community, including the United States, is taking steps that include encouraging all parties to participate in reconciliation discussions.

While the international community, including the United States, continues to provide vital humanitarian and development assistance to Somalia, its efforts have been limited by lack of security, access to vulnerable populations, and effective government institutions. The international community's humanitarian assistance to Somalia, which primarily consists of food aid, has not reduced the country's acute malnutrition rates, which have remained above the emergency threshold in some parts of the country. According to UN officials, however, malnutrition is the result of a combination of immediate and underlying causes, including insufficient dietary intake, inadequate health care, and inadequate water and sanitation services. Ongoing insecurity constrains the international community's ability to monitor its provision of humanitarian and development assistance to Somalia. Furthermore, U.S. officials' inability to travel to the country has prevented them from independently monitoring assistance. The international community's plans to increase development assistance to Somalia depend on political progress and stability, which have not yet been achieved.

U.S. strategy for Somalia, outlined in the Administration's 2007 report to Congress on its Comprehensive Regional Strategy on Somalia (the Comprehensive Strategy), is incomplete. While the Comprehensive Strategy addresses the components required of it by U.S. law, it does not include the full range of U.S. government activities related to Somalia, such as DOD efforts to promote regional stability, and it does not reference other key U.S. government strategic documents for Somalia. Furthermore, the Comprehensive Strategy does not fully address any of the six desirable characteristics of an effective national strategy, lacking information on necessary resources, investments, and risk management. A separate, classified report provides more information on selected U.S. strategic planning efforts for Somalia.