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## President intent on the gradual 250% salary increment for the armed forces

### He reiterates plans to reform and restructure the sector



By M. A. Egge

The President H.E. Abdirahman Mohamed Abdillahi Irro has once again pledged that he would see to it that his political campaign promises would have to be realized and achieved, especially as concerns the increasing of the salaries of the servicemen. The Head of State who is also the Commander-in-Chief noted that his

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## Cabinet ministers approve 2025 draft budget while the President advised the council



The President told the Council of Ministers that the Ministry of Finance should be assisted in collecting taxes and increasing the income of the country

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## National Army Commander says military ready to implement Presidential recommendations



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## Officials with expertise in economics appointed to the Central Bank of Somaliland



Mohamoud Walaaleye

The President of the Republic of Somaliland, H.E.. Abdirahman M. Abdillahi Irro, has appointed officials with expertise in economics to the Central Bank of Somaliland. The Governor of the Central Bank,

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## John Peter Pham Likely to Become US Envoy to Africa



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## The state is intent on completing construction of 20 roads, says Minister Afgaab

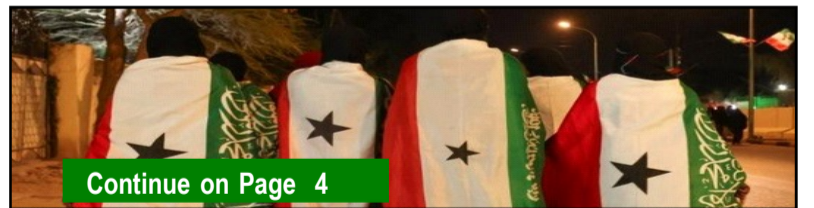


By M.A. Egge

The Minister of Transport and Roads Development of Somaliland, Hon. Osman Afgaab Nur has stated that the government is steadfastly intent on the implementation of the constructions of 20 major roads in

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## US House committee calls for Somaliland office to counter China



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## Religion ministry embarks on three weeks of campaigns against drugs abuse



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## President intent on the gradual 250% salary increment for the armed forces



salary of the army and reforming it. "Although the economy of Somaliland is strained owing to the events and happenings in the years 2022, 2023 and 2024 due to reasons we all know, including the fact that the country has been involved in wars, elections and damaged economic infrastructure, the losses following the fires of Waheen and Wajaale, I will implement the increase in the salary of the army that I promised which was two hundred and fifty percent during my term, and I will issue Executive Orders to the effect", he said.

President Abdirahman Iirro said that the political program of WADDANI party in the presidential election on defence and nationalism was streamlining the armed forces, bolstering and modernizing their armaments and ample remunerations.

He said that the land, sea and air defences should be sound and appropriate.

He pointed out that the first goal is to reform and modernize the army gradually hence steps to be taken include;

1. Making a plan to modernize the national army.
2. Making the strategy of the national army.
3. Establishing administrative rules and regulations to strengthen the national army.
4. Conducting military census.
5. Nationalization of civil forces.
6. Formation of reserve forces.
7. Formation of the air force.

plans to have the armed forces and associated security arms sector would have to be bolstered and the personnel remuneration appraised. He said that the 250% increment on the salaries of the security arms that he had pledged would be gradually implemented despite that tight economy the nation faces.

Of note is the fact that the president revealed that within the plans in the pipeline is the establishment of the country's air-force division of the armed forces.

The President expressed the sentiments as he addressed the members of the armed forces at the military headquarters on Saturday. First of all, the President greeted the unit of the National Army, where he was received by the Commander of the National Army, Major General Nuh Ismail Tani and the various top officers.

The President toured and inspected the various units which the

command consists of, and inaugurated several sectors building structures that have been put up.

The Commander of the National Army, Major General Nuh Ismail Tani welcomed the President while appreciating the visit.

The President speech that was quite substantial and highly appealed to the members of the forces across the cadres.

He reiterated his intent on reforming and restructuring the sector to make it a formidable force.

He said, "I decided to come among you today to observe your situation, listen to the information and reports you want to share with me, and to observe and reflect on where I should start the reformation and reconstruction of the National Army". He pointed out every country earnestly strive to make its forces a formidable one.

He pledged that he would fulfil his promise made on increasing the

## Officials with expertise in economics appointed to the Central Bank of Somaliland



Mr. Abdinasir Ahmed Hirsi, Deputy Governor Hamse Abdirahman Kheyre, and Director General Yasin Jama Ahmed are all said to have knowledge and experience in the field of economics and banking operations.

With his unique blend of expertise in the private and public sectors, Abdinasir is aware of the current challenges and emerging trends in Somaliland's financial landscape. This positions him as a forward-thinking leader capable of driving meaningful reforms and fostering economic resilience.

As Governor, Abdinasir is poised to lead the central bank of Somaliland into a new era of innovation, stability, and growth, ensuring the nation's financial sector continues to thrive. Governor Abdinasir graduated in Banking and Financial from prestigious institutions in Malaysia,

equipping him with a strong academic foundation in financial systems and global banking practices.

His professional journey began in the private sector, where he gained invaluable experience working in the banking industry in Malaysia. Upon returning to Somaliland, he continued his career with Dahabshiil Bank International, contributing significantly to the institution's growth and innovation in the financial sector.

He also served his country with distinctions, holding key leadership positions, including, Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Climate Change and Rural Affairs.

He demonstrated exceptional leadership and a deep understanding of governance, policy-making, and international relations in those roles.

## The state is intent on completing construction of 20 roads, says Minister Afgaab

the country.

He made the statement as he inspected and monitored the ongoing construction of the road connecting Din-Qal and Bandar-Wanaag, which is part of the major road connecting the cities of Hargeisa, Odweyne and Burao.

He was accompanied by the outgoing Governor of the Central Bank and the Director of the Roads Development Agency, Mr. Mowliid Nouh Ibrahim amongst other notable personalities who graced the occasion.

Abdillahi Aare Ismaail, one of the elders who are area residents pledged the support of the chores in any way needed.

He noted that the infrastructural needs such as roads were imperative and that they would support concerted efforts to achieve their realization.

The outgoing Chairman of the Central Bank of Somalia, Mr. Ali Abdillahi Dahir, who was present, said on his part, "We deem this road as the Third Corridor, while Berbera to Wajaale, Borama and Lawya-ado, Burao to Hargeisa, Burao to Erigavo, which are the four roads that are the backbone of the country's economy".

Somaliland Road Development Manager Eng Mowliid Nouh Ibrahim said that they took a clear role in the construction of the highway, and

acknowledged the noble role of the local community they played in the implementation of this road.

He said, "This road connecting Din-Qal and Bandar-wanaag has been started by the government, and its construction will connect the project from Hargeisa, Burao to Oodweyne and Berbera – Hargeysa highway and I applaud the area residents". Saying that the African Development Bank is part of the project, he called for the support in concerted efforts such that the whole task may be a success.

In conclusion, the Minister of Transport and Road Development of Somaliland, Hon. Osman Af-gaab Nur, said that the construction of the road is one of 20 roads that the government is planning to complete. He said, "We are grateful to the local authorities for the ongoing work of the Ministry of Transport and Road Development, and we are grateful for their efforts. Everything is worthwhile and achievable when we pull together all our efforts concertedly."

He continued, "The construction of 20 roads is one of the government's plans. The ongoing project is part of the project. The project is part of the Berbera Corridor and Oodweyne-Burao. Our plan is to have more roads. We hope that the Oodweyne project will be completed timely."

## Cabinet ministers approve 2025 draft budget while the President advised the council

By M.A. Egge

The 6th session of the Council of Ministers of the Unity and Action Government, chaired by the President of the Republic of Somaliland, His Excellency Abdirahman Mohamed Abdillahi Iirro, while flanked by the Vice President His Excellency Mohamed Ali Aw Abdi, was held on Thursday at the Presidential Palace.

The agenda presented to the Council of Ministers was limited to the proposal for the draft national budget for the year 2025.

The Minister of Finance and Economic Development presented the details related to the structure of the 2025 budget to the Council of Ministers.

The 2025 Budget consists of four parts:

1. The Central Government Budget
2. The Budget of Independent Institutions
3. The Budget of Local Governments and
4. Projects sponsored by donors.

The President told the Council of



Ministers that the Ministry of Finance should be assisted in collecting taxes and increasing the income of the country.

He said that every Ministry and every institution that collects revenue, is instructed to transfer that revenue directly to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development of the country.

Directive on the issue was also given to the aviation ministry.

After a long debate and analysis related to the 2025 Budget Proposal,

the President proposed to the Council of Ministers to vote on the proposal for the 2025 Budget Proposal.

At the meeting of the Council of Ministers, which was attended by 43 members, they all voted confidently to approve the 2025 Budget Proposal, with no one objecting or remaining silent.

Meanwhile, the 2025 Budget Proposal will be submitted to the House of Representatives of the Republic of Somaliland to fulfill their legal obligations.

## Religion ministry embarks on three weeks of campaigns against drugs abuse



Dahir Jama (Baashe), announced that on Friday, the 17th of this month, the country will begin a public awareness campaign on the dangers of drugs, which will run for three weeks.

The Minister called on the imams

of mosques and the drug awareness and eradication committee, the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vices committee (PVPV), and the coordinators of the ministry in the regions of the country to participate actively and fully in this campaign. Drugs peddling have been

increasing rapidly in recent years in Somaliland, with young people using them most.

He also said that the government's plan for cooperation and action is to raise awareness of the public about the dangers of various drugs that are secretly entering the country. He said, "The government's 'Joint and Action' plan is to raise awareness among the public about the dangers of drugs and alcohol, so awareness organizations, scholars of the country, and preachers will participate in this three-week activity. God willing, I hope that it will be a success, as we always serve the country and the people, thinking about the safety of our community; and let everyone do their best in this campaign."

## National Army Commander says military ready to implement Presidential recommendations

By Mohamoud Walaleeye

The Commander of the National Army Major General Nuh Ismail Taani has said armed forces are ready to implement the Head of State's recommendations.

The armed forces chief expressed his sentiments during President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdillahi's visit on Saturday to the military headquarters.

Commander Nuh said that the purpose of the President's first visit, was to get first-hand information and



advice.

He said that the officers of the Somali National Army at the meeting were ready to accept any advice and directions as may be deemed.

The Commander-in-Chief H.E. Abdirahman Iirro received a salute from units of the Somaliland National Army, and met with the highest officials of the Somaliland National Army.

The Minister of Defense, the Minister of Interior, the Minister of Presidency, The Chief of National Intelligence, the Chief of Police, other service and sectional commanders of various forces, and officials from the government and national councils were present.

## A Land Divided: Water, Trade, and the Unyielding Conflicts in the Horn of Africa - Prof. Nassir H. Kahin

In the arid expanse of the Ethiopian Somali Region, where life revolves around scarce water points and shifting trade routes, survival is a battle as much against nature as against neighbors. The recent Gaashaamo and Da'awalley massacres have thrown this precarious balance into stark relief, highlighting the deep-seated challenges faced by pastoral nomads whose livelihoods depend on the region's fragile resources. Here, violence is not just the result of long-standing clan rivalries—it is a symptom of a larger crisis ignored for far too long by local leaders and the international community.

The massacres, both stemming from disputes over access to water and grazing land, reveal how resource scarcity has transformed into a deadly flashpoint. Despite warnings from organizations like the Water, Peace, and Security Partnership, which has consistently underscored the role of water insecurity in fueling violence, little has been done to address these grievances. Their predictive tools and advocacy for collaborative water resource management have yet to find traction among policymakers. The results, as seen in the scorched earth of the Hawd Reserve and the disrupted lives of pastoralist families, are as tragic as they are preventable.

These issues are not confined to Ethiopia's borders. The ripple effects extend into Somalia, Somaliland, and Kenya, where nomadic movements are increasingly constrained by conflict zones. Disrupted trade routes have paralyzed the economy, leaving livestock markets empty and the pastoralists who rely on them destitute. Such disruptions reinforce a vicious cycle: poverty exacerbates competition for resources, which in turn breeds more violence.

The international community has not been silent. Regional organizations like IGAD have called for a unified protocol to manage shared water resources, but negotiations remain stalled. Meanwhile, cross-border tensions simmer, fueled by a zero-sum mentality that pits one group's survival against another's demise. As the massacres demonstrate, this mindset not only perpetuates cycles of violence but also undermines the fragile interdependence that sustains life in this harsh environment.

The parallels to other crisis zones are striking. In Mali, for instance, water scarcity and mismanagement have similarly amplified local conflicts, prompting comparisons between the Horn of Africa and other regions battling the effects of climate change and fragile

governance. Experts have pointed to models like the Nile Basin Initiative or Southern Africa's River Basin Organizations, where nations have managed to forge cooperation from chaos. But the lessons remain unheeded here.

The stakes could not be higher. As the Water, Peace, and Security Partnership has warned, the failure to act is not just a humanitarian tragedy but a destabilizing force for the entire region. "Water scarcity has become a weapon of war," one analyst observed, "and unless we address it, the bloodshed will continue." This sentiment was echoed by IGAD officials, who lamented the lack of political will to tackle the underlying causes of conflict.

Yet, history offers hope. Regions like Rwanda and South Africa have shown that even the deepest divisions can be healed with the right mix of political courage, grassroots engagement, and international support. The Somali Region, and its troubled neighbors, must embrace a similar transformation, replacing zero-sum competition with a collaborative framework that values shared survival over mutual destruction. Only then can the blood-soaked earth of Gaashaamo and Da'awalley give way to a landscape of peace and resilience.

## John Peter Pham Likely to Become US Envoy to Africa

Politico magazine, which specializes in US national security affairs, said that Mr. John Peter Pham will be a candidate to become the next US envoy to Africa and will take over the Sudan file in the new administration of President Donald Trump.

The magazine said, quoting what it described as "three American security sources" within the Trump administration, that Trump's potential envoy to Africa will be the veteran Republican expert on African affairs, "John Peter Pham," who will become the highest-ranking official in the State Department overseeing US-African affairs.

The magazine, which specializes in security affairs, added that according to three sources familiar with the file and authorized to speak – without revealing their identity – to discuss internal transition issues, Pham, who previously served as a special envoy to the Sahel and Great Lakes region in Africa during Trump's first term, is the strongest candidate for the position and will succeed Mr. Tom Perrilio, President Joe Biden's envoy.

The magazine added that if he is confirmed, Pham will be tasked with dealing with some of the most thorny issues of US national security on the agenda of the next administration, "including the ongoing threat from ISIS and other terrorist groups in Africa, China's growing geopolitical influence across the continent, and the deadly civil war in Sudan."

The sources said that the new administration is taking into account that the conflict in Sudan has turned the country into what is considered the worst humanitarian crisis in the world "and a hotbed of activity by foreign powers competing for influence there." The magazine pointed out that the previous administration – Biden – accused and named one of the warring parties in Sudan, the "Rapid Support Forces militia" – a term that had not been used by semi-official media outlets before – of committing genocide this month, nearly a year after congressional leaders urged it to do so.

The magazine noted that it sought an official comment from a spokesman for the Trump transition team, but he did not comment, while Pham himself declined to comment on the news of his appointment.

The Atlanta Center for Strategic and National Studies describes John Peter Pham as a distinguished American academic and author

specializing in international relations with a focus on African affairs.

Pham was the U.S. Special Envoy for the Sahel in Africa from March 2020 until the end of the Trump administration in January 2021. He specializes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, East, North, and West Africa, Southern and Central Africa, and Sudan. He is fluent in three languages: English, French and Italian.

Pham is currently a distinguished fellow at the Atlantic Council since March 2021, after completing his public service as the U.S. Special Envoy for the Sahel with the personal rank of Ambassador.

Pham wrote in his academic biography on the Atlantic Center that he has written more than 300 articles and reviews and is the author, editor, or translator of more than a dozen books, including, most recently, \*Somalia: Fixing Africa's Most Failed State\* (Tafelberg, 2013; co-authored with Greg Mills and David Kilcullen).

Dr. Pham also contributes to several publications including The National Interest and Foreign Policy, and appears regularly as a commentator on U.S. and non-U.S. print, broadcast, and radio media including CBS, BBC, Voice of America, CNN, Fox News, MSNBC, NPR, BBC, Reuters, Associated Press, Agence France-Presse, Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Washington Post, Washington Times, USA Today, Newsweek, U.S. News & World Report, Times of London, New Statesman, Maclean's, Le Monde, and Le Tan. He has been described as a strong advocate of strong U.S. engagement with Africa and served as a member of the USAID-funded International Republican Institute delegation to observe Liberia's historic post-conflict national elections in 2005. He also served on IRI's pre-election assessment (2006) and election observation delegations to Nigeria (2007, 2011) and Somaliland (2010).

Ambassador Pham has received numerous decorations and awards from African nations in recognition of his contributions throughout his career to strengthening U.S.-Africa relations, including the Commander of the National Order of Mali, the Commander of the National Order of Burkina Faso, the Officer of the National Order of Merit of Niger, the Commander of the National Order of Merit of Gabon, and the Commander of the Order of Friendship Among the Peoples of Burundi.

# Welsh Parliament Congratulate the Republic of Somaliland on successful Presidential and National Parties



This motion tabled by MP John Griffiths, was as follows;

1. Congratulate the Republic of Somaliland on its successful Presidential and National Parties election on 13 November.
2. Commends the National Electoral Commission's pivotal role.
3. Recognises Dr. Abdirahman Mohamed Abdillahi as President, Mohamed Ali as Vice President, and the elected parties: Waddani, Kulmiye, and Kaah.
4. Commends President Muse Bihi Abdi for accepting the results and ensuring a democratic transfer of power, and for holding a dual election during his office term.
5. Welcomes the opportunity to

strengthen cooperation between Welsh Government and Welsh Parliament and the Government and Parliament of Somaliland, recommending institutional partnerships and twinning initiatives to foster mutual collaboration. Further different Parliamentarians including Heledd Fychan, Julie Morgan, Llyr Gruffydd, Mabon ap Gwynfor, Mike Hedges, Peredur Owen Griffiths, Rhys ab Owen subscribed.

Statement of Appreciation and Recognition  
I am honoured to share with His Excellency, the President, a statement of congratulations from the Welsh Parliament, referencing

OPIN-2024-0452, which celebrates the Republic of Somaliland on its successful Presidential and National Parties elections. This recognition underscores Somaliland's unwavering commitment to democratic values, peaceful governance, and transparent electoral processes. On this occasion, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the Welsh Parliament, and in particular to Honourable John Griffiths, MP, for his invaluable support and recognition of Somaliland's achievements. Your encouragement is a testament to the strong and enduring ties between our nations and serves as a vital source of strength as we continue to strive for greater peace, stability, and prosperity. Your recognition not only highlights Somaliland's progress but also inspires us to persevere in our efforts to build a future defined by unity, progress, and inclusivity. Thank you for standing alongside Somaliland in our journey towards a brighter tomorrow. Abdikarim Abdi Adan

## International recognition for Somaliland should be conditioned on concrete economic and political reforms

On Somaliland's historical political economy, and how best outsiders can help Somalilanders take charge of their destiny in the quest for continued economic and political development.

Ken Opalo

I: Why ruin a plucky would-be state's economic and political development with immediate full recognition?

The U.S. government under Donald Trump will most likely recognize Somaliland as a sovereign state in a move that will likely be followed by other governments in Africa and around the world. A bill has already been introduced in the U.S. legislature to this end. This post discusses the pros and cons of international recognition for Somalia's most successful breakaway region.

The main argument below is that while the people of Somaliland deserve and have a strong case for international recognition, such a development at this time would very likely take away the very incentives that have set them apart from the rest of Somalia over the last 33 years. To be blunt, achieving full sovereignty with *de jure* international recognition at this time would do little beyond incentivizing elite-level pursuit of sovereign rents at the expense of continued political and economic development. What has



made Somaliland work is that its elites principally derive their legitimacy from their people, and not the international system. Stated differently, full sovereignty runs the risk of separating both the Somaliland state and ruling elites from the productive forces of society; which in turn would free politicians (and policymakers) from having to think of their people as the ultimate drivers of their overall economic wellbeing. Just like in the rest of the Continent, the resulting separation of "suspended elites" from the socio-economic foundations of Somaliland society and inevitable policy extraversion would be catastrophic for Somalilanders. The last thing the Horn needs is another Djibouti — a country whose low-ambition ruling elites are content with hawking their geostrategic location at throwaway prices while doing precious little to advance their citizens' material wellbeing (Djibouti's poverty rate is a

staggering 70%). With this in mind, it would be ideal if Somaliland achieved full legal sovereignty after making strides in improving its human capital base (the education budget remains atrociously low), figuring out how to be a productive logistics and business services hub, and broadly diversifying its economy beyond relying on remittances, animal exports, financial services, and gold mining. In addition, it would be preferable to prioritize further political institutionalization before recognition. Somaliland's "pastoral democracy" characterized by the institutionalization of elections and presidential turnovers is certainly commendable. However, international praise of its democratic traditions ignores quite a few red flags. The fact of the matter is that Somaliland has what can at best be described as

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# US House committee calls for Somaliland office to counter China



An influential US-China subcommittee in the US House of Representatives is calling for the State Department to open a representative office in Somaliland, the breakaway state in Somalia, to counter rising Chinese influence in the region.

"Such a move is critical for advancing US strategic interests in the Horn of Africa and countering the growing influence" of China, wrote John Moolenaar, chairman of the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party, in a letter dated Jan. 15 and addressed to outgoing Secretary of State Antony Blinken. "Without US engagement, [China] may succeed in shifting Somaliland's interests in its favor, further consolidating its influence in the Red Sea and beyond," it said. The United States, along with the rest of the international community, does not recognize Somaliland as a country. Last month Semafor reported that Somaliland will be much closer to being recognized by the US as the world's newest country when Donald Trump returns to the White House.

The committee chair stressed that the establishment of an office in Somaliland's capital city of Hargeisa "need not conflict with the United States' current recognition of the government of Somalia". It pointed to other nations, "including the United Kingdom, Denmark, Kenya, and Taiwan," who maintain offices there without formally recognizing

Somaliland's sovereignty.

While foreign affairs committees often send letters to the State Department, this one has significance because it has moved discussions around the future of Somaliland into the much more potent US-China sphere, said Cameron Hudson, an analyst with the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "If the Somaliland issue is embraced by China-hawks to push back against China's influence then that is a serious departure from past discussions and increases the likelihood that it will be actively pursued," he said.

The call comes as Somalilanders, who declared independence in 1991, are hoping that the incoming Trump administration will greatly improve their chances of international recognition with support from the US. Several of Trump's incoming Africa officials have been publicly much more willing to consider some form of recognition for the state of 4 million people.

Somaliland is strategically located in geopolitical and trade terms with key global military and shipping interests in the region that could help the US counter China. In particular, the Bab-el Mandeb strait in the Gulf of Aden between Somaliland's Berbera port, Djibouti, and Yemen is widely seen as a critical shipping choke point for moving goods and military wares in the sub-region.



# The would-be African nation in love with Donald Trump



Many people in Somaliland are convinced that the United States, under the incoming presidency of Donald Trump, is poised to become the world's first country to recognize the self-declared republic.

The territory declared independence 33 years ago after Somalia descended into civil war - and in many ways has functioned as a de facto nation-state ever since. "Donald is our saviour. He is a wise and practical man. God bless America," says university student Aisha Ismail, whose voice trembles with delight at the prospect.

She is speaking to me from Hargeisa, Somaliland's capital - a city 850km (530 miles) north of Mogadishu, the seat of Somalia's government.

For those in Mogadishu, Somaliland is an indivisible part of Somalia.

"I doubt Donald Trump knows what Somaliland is, never mind where it is," says Abdi Mohamud, a data analyst in Mogadishu, whose voice starts to shake.

"I am spitting fire."

He is so angry because Ms. Ismail's great expectation is not necessarily a pipe dream, at least in the long term.

Powerful and influential Republicans are pushing for the same thing, including Congressman Scott Perry who last month introduced [a bill proposing formal US recognition for Somaliland](#).

It followed the publication in April 2023 of [Project 2025](#), a roadmap for the second Trump presidency compiled by the prominent right-wing Heritage Foundation and more than 100 other conservative organisations

The document mentions only two African territories in its sub-Saharan Africa section - Somaliland and Djibouti - and proposes "the recognition of Somaliland statehood as a hedge against the US's deteriorating position in Djibouti".

However, the fact that sub-Saharan Africa takes up less than two pages in the 900-plus page plan suggests the continent is very low on the priority list.

Also, there is no guarantee the incoming administration will follow the blueprint, some of which Trump

has already disavowed.

But one thing is clear. The US has already started to change its stance on Somaliland, moving away from its Mogadishu-focused approach, known as the "one-track" Somalia policy.

Somalia has cost the US dearly in financial, resource and human terms since the early 1990s when the bodies of 18 American servicemen were dragged through the streets of Mogadishu after US helicopters were shot down by Somali clan fighters.

The battle, known as "Black Hawk Down", was America's worst in terms of casualties since the Vietnam War.

"Any move towards recognizing Somaliland's independence would not only contravene Somalia's sovereignty but also destabilize the region by setting a dangerous precedent," says Somali State Minister for Foreign Affairs Ali Mohamed Omar.

The African Union and other global powers believe territorial integrity is paramount. Recognizing Somaliland could set off a chain reaction with separatists across the world demanding recognition for the territories they claim.

Omar also highlighted concerns about a possible repeat of the first Trump administration's decision to withdraw from Somalia most American troops who have been fighting al-Shabab, regularly described as al-Qaeda's most successful affiliate.

Under Joe Biden's presidency about 500 US troops have been stationed in Somalia - carrying out special operations and training an elite Somali force, Danab, which means "Lightning" and has proved more effective than the regular Somali army at rooting out al-Shabab.

The Americans have an airbase at Baledogle, north-west of Mogadishu, and conduct regular airstrikes against Islamist insurgents.

"A withdrawal would create a significant security vacuum, emboldening terrorist groups and threatening the stability of not only Somalia but the broader Horn of Africa," Omar warned.

The US has been training members of Somalia's elite Danab brigade to take on Islamist militants

The minister's remarks are in a

similar vein but more measured than Somalia's response to a deal between Somaliland and Ethiopia whereby recognition would reportedly be granted in exchange for sea access.

I received late-night calls from Somalis who said they were unable to sleep over the controversial proposal.

Somalia's then-Environment Minister Aden Ibrahim Aw Hirsi told me at the time: "You are always going on about 'political bombshells' in your reporting.

"People here are talking about a political earthquake. This is far more serious. It is a tsunami."

[Turkey has since mediated an end to the feud](#) but the fact that Somalia recently signed a \$600,000 (£492,000) a year deal with top Washington lobbying firm, the BGR Group, suggests it is worried about relations with the incoming Trump administration.

The US last month [abstained from voting on a UN Security Council resolution](#) to fund the latest incarnation of the African Union intervention force in Somalia.

A key architect of Republican Africa thinking, especially when it comes to Somali issues, is Joshua Meservey, who recently moved from the Heritage Foundation to the right-leaning Hudson Institute.

"The case for Somaliland in US terms is very compelling," he argues. "I think the question of recognition will definitely be discussed, although the guiding north star is what is best for US national interests in practical terms."

Senior Africa officials under Trump mark one, including the former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Tibor Nagy, and Africa

envoy, Peter Pham, are energetic supporters of Somaliland's independence.

Like many American Republicans, Somaliland's Foreign Minister Abdirahman Dahir Adan sees the relationship in transactional terms. "If the deal is good for us, we will take it. If the US wants a military base here, we will give it to them."

Recognition sympathizers argue that Somaliland is located at the site of several converging US interests - economic, military and strategic.

Mr. Meservey adds that the territory should be "rewarded" for adhering to democratic principles, not relying on foreign aid and having a small government.

Its long coastline runs along one of the world's busiest shipping lanes. Yemen's Iranian-backed Houthi rebels may have replaced Somali pirates as the main disruptor of traffic in the area but the attacks remain a major threat to global trade and draw the region closer to the war in the Middle East.

The scramble for foreign bases along the Horn of Africa's coast is of concern to the US, which established its largest military facility on the continent in Djibouti in 2002. Russia has its eyes on Port Sudan; the United Arab Emirates (UAE) used Eritrea's Assab to fight the Houthis and Djibouti is chock-a-block with foreign forces, including the Chinese, who not only have a well-placed military facility but also run the huge port.

Turkey's largest base on foreign soil stretches along Somalia's coastline just south of Mogadishu.

Dealing with a rising China is a top Trump priority.

The US has accused the Chinese of interfering with its activities in Djibouti by shining lasers into the eyes of its air force pilots and is keen to move elsewhere.

It also wants to disrupt China's Belt and Road Initiative, which is taking over much of Africa.

The Red Sea port of Berbera, whether you see it as part of Somaliland or Somalia, has much to offer as an alternative.

China is not there; indeed it is outraged that Taiwan in 2020 established diplomatic relations

with the breakaway republic.

The UAE, a key US ally, runs the recently expanded port and hopes it will rival Djibouti.

During the Biden administration, top American officials, including the chief of US Africa Command (Africom), conducted site visits to Berbera, which has a 4km runway ironically constructed by the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

This was later identified by the US as an emergency landing site for space shuttles - interesting given Trump's ally Elon Musk's obsession with space.

In 2022, the US National Defense Authorization Act was amended to include Somaliland, enhancing security co-operation and potentially paving the way for stronger diplomatic and economic ties.

Donald Trump may be enticed to recognize Somaliland if he sees a good business deal in it

Pro-recognition Republicans have presented Somaliland as a good business case, hoping to appeal to Trump's deal-making approach. Project 2025 used the term "hedge".

A US-based Somaliland diplomat said: "It depends how they sell it to him. They have to make it attractive; they have to seduce him."

Whether he means it or not, bringing up the explosive issue of recognition would likely suit Trump the disruptor. It would certainly bring him attention and he could boast about being first. It would also enrage Somalia, a country he included in his reported 2018 list of "shithole" nations and a place to which he wants to deport undocumented Somalis, failed asylum seekers and criminals.

There is already talk in Somaliland that the territory will be used as a "dumping ground" for such people in exchange for US recognition.

US academic Ken Menkhaus, who has followed Somali issues for decades, brings much-needed balance to the debate.

"It is very likely we will see significant shifts in US policy towards Somaliland and Somalia," he says.

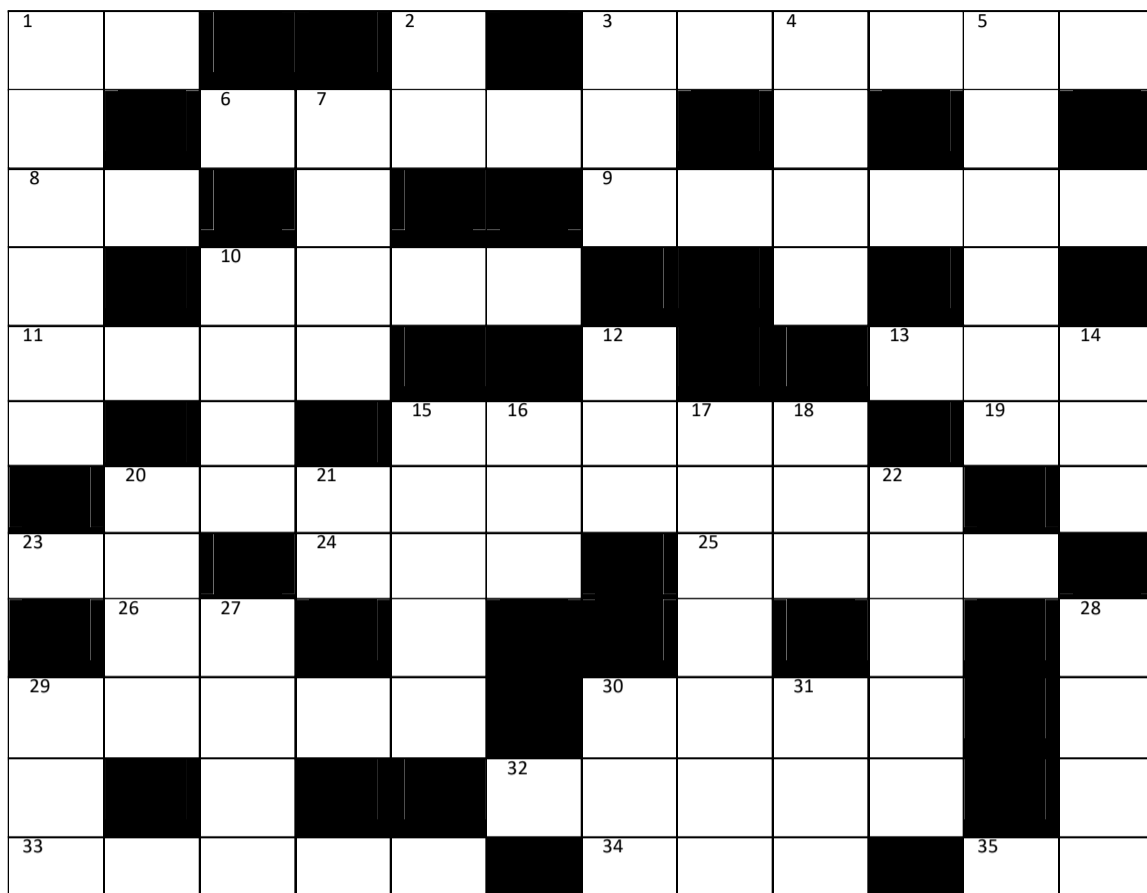
"Mr Trump has a deep suspicion of foreign aid, is sceptical about state-building and is a neo-isolationist."

The Horn of Africa needs to be braced for change.



*Mary Harper has written two books about Somalia, including [Everything You Have Told Me Is True](#), a look at life under al-Shabab.*

# THT Puzzle



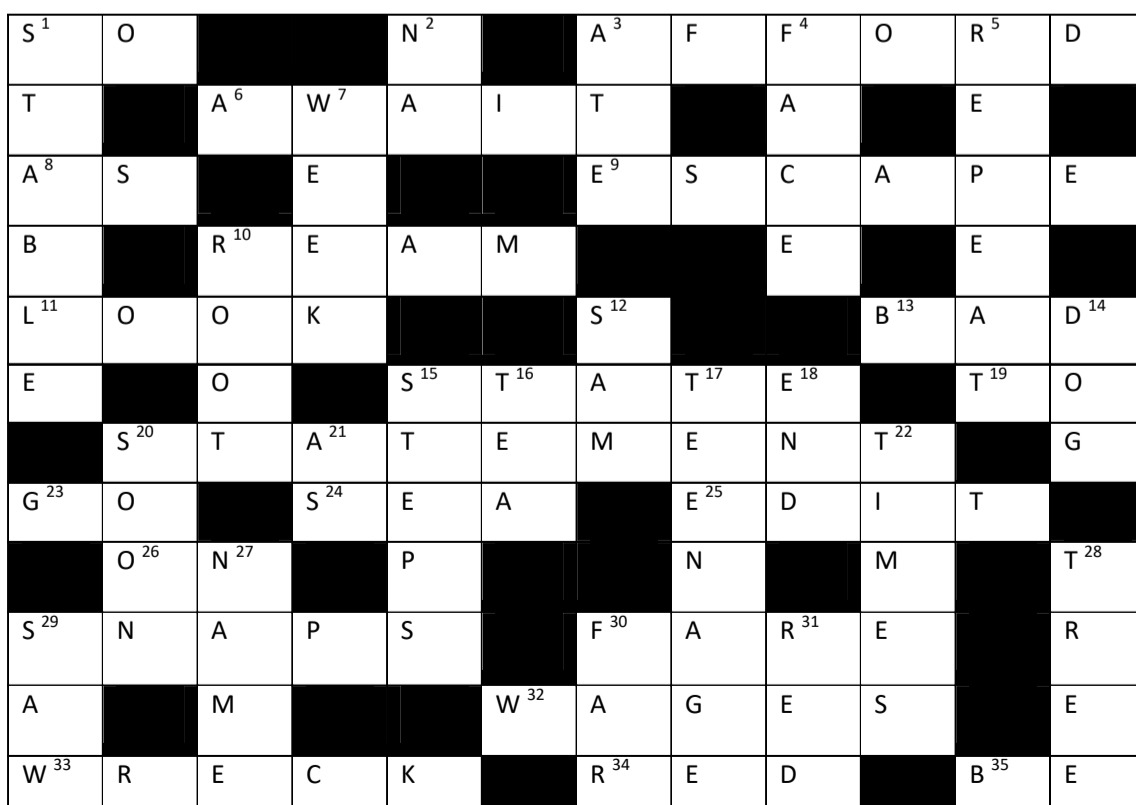
**ACROSS**

- 1 Therefore
- 3 have enough money.
- 6 Wait for
- 8 Being as
- 9 Escaping
- 10 Quantity used on papers
- 11 Eye or lookout
- 13 damaging/opposite of good
- 15 Municipal
- 19 Towards
- 20 Speech
- 23 Go off
- 24 Ocean
- 25 Change or control
- 26 Upon
- 29 Shouts or cracks
- 30 Ticket or meal
- 32 Salaries
- 33 Crash
- 34 Reddish
- 35 Remain

**DOWN**

- 1 Secure
- 2 not available in short forms
- 3 breakfasted
- 4 Stand facing
- 5 Repetition
- 7 Calendar week
- 10 Rootle
- 12 amount in cash
- 14 Puppy
- 15 Stairs
- 16 Drink
- 17 Juvenile
- 18 Ending
- 20 Shortly
- 21 BEING AS
- 22 Occasions
- 27 Surname
- 28 Family tree
- 29 Witnessed
- 30 Far away
- 31 Reddish

## Previous Answer



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**International recognition for Somaliland should be conditioned on concrete economic and political reforms**

“managed democracy” with restrictions on party formation (only three are allowed per time), a moribund upper legislative chamber in desperate need of reform, and an enduring vulnerability to fractious and exclusionary (and at times violent) clan politics. External praise of Somaliland’s democracy often comes with standard issue *fetishization of ritual electoralism and turnover*, instead of a clear-eyed understanding of the real features of its current stage of political development.

Presidential turnover is great, but what’s even more important is having a political system that is broadly inclusive and responsive, and that delivers on basics such as personal safety, education, health, and essential infrastructure. This isn’t intended to downplay the demonstrated elite commitment to power-sharing over time. I fully appreciate the fact Somaliland’s elite political stability stretches back to even before their declaration of independence. Throughout the resistance against Siad Barre’s autocracy the SNM admirably avoided personalism and maintained a strong civilian presence in its leadership (unlike most rebel groups on the Continent). But elite pacts anchored on age-based hegemony over society are not enough. Somaliland must aspire to modernize both its politics and economy.

It is not obvious to me how full recognition would resolve the many challenges currently faced by Somalilanders. To the contrary, it’s very likely that it would lock in these suboptimal elements of Somaliland’s political economy, or make them worse. Which is why friends of Somaliland ought to consider conditioning future recognition on concrete political and economic development milestones. Despite the noises from Mogadishu and elsewhere on the Continent, nothing currently stops Somaliland and its international partners from making progress on the points highlighted above. Recognition will mean nothing if it doesn’t come with serious attention to expanding economic opportunities and material improvements in human welfare. That should be the focus of elites in Hargeisa, not a rush to recognition in search of sovereign rents.

Finally, while accepting that it’s ultimately Somalilanders’ decision to make, I’m personally partial to the idea of a strong Federal Republic within current borders or even the emirates model from the Gulf as the best mechanisms for managing Somalia’s complicated tapestry of historical facts on the ground. That, in my view, would avoid the sociopolitical stagnation/decay and wanton external predation that will most certainly follow a breakup of Somalia into weak statelets. After

Somaliland, Jubaland and Puntland would likely want out, too.

II: On paper, Somaliland’s case for independence is strong; and there are good reasons to suspect that it would succeed as a full member of the international state system. Somaliland’s strongest case for independence is that it is a viable polity. The territory’s political history over much of the last century sets it apart from the rest of Somalia. The current boundaries along the “Rodd line” took shape back in 1897 when British colonial occupation stalled Ethiopia’s post-Adwa imperial expansion under Menelik II. In subsequent decades, “British Somaliland” was governed separately from “Italian Somalia” to the South. Before that coastal Somaliland’s orientation was towards the Egyptian world, while Somalia’s coastal urban centers were under Zanzibari/Omani control and influence. And even before that sections of Somaliland’s current territory were for centuries part of the Adal Sultanate and later the Isaaq Sultanate. Before Zanzibaris showed up to dominate its coast, Central Somalia was dominated by the Ajuran empire.

Of course shared historical unitary stateness isn’t the only metric for evaluating claims to autonomy. Quests for state/nation building are deliberate sociopolitical projects that live or die with the choices people make and effort they put into them. History is not destiny as all borders are arbitrary reflections of human agency and limits. Therefore, Somali nationalists who have a strong desire to see socio-cultural and political unity across “Greater Somalia” shouldn’t be dismissed offhand. The point of looking at historical Somali stateness is to show that besides ethnicity/religion/common *xeer* (which are powerful unifying forces in their own right) there isn’t a deep *political* basis for uniting all the Somali lands into “Greater Somalia” across Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia.

The union of “British Somaliland” and “Italian Somalia” in 1960 was a conscious choice, albeit one that a majority of Somalilanders came to regret barely two years later. Pan-Somali nationalism (*somalinimo*) in the lead up to independence and the quest to eventually unite all Somali lands dovetailed nicely with Somalilanders’ desire to regain access to the grazing lands on the Hawd plateau that found themselves on the wrong side of the “Rodd Line.” However, the union would be short-lived. In a cruel twist of historical irony, the quest for Somali unity eventually broke post-independence Somalia. The sponsoring of irredentist claims against Kenya and Ethiopia fermented wariness against a strong Mogadishu in Nairobi and Addis Ababa which persists to this

day (it’s no coincidence that both countries are friends of Somaliland, while Kenya is a strong booster of Jubaland). Most significantly, Siad Barre’s failed invasion of Ethiopia to conquer the Ogaden in 1977 sparked a civil war from which Somalia is yet to recover. It’s in the midst of this civil war that Somaliland withdrew from Somalia in 1991.

In total, Somaliland’s peacetime existence as an integral part of modern Somalia barely lasted 20 years.

Human geography and political economy also set Somaliland apart from the core heartland of Somalia. Somalia’s densest population centers are in the central Shebelle river valley and central Somaliland (which places Somalia in the “bad geography” column on the Herbst scale). It doesn’t help that successive governments after 1960 did little to connect central Somaliland to Mogadishu, whether through infrastructure, effective elite cooptation (beyond adopting English as the national language), or even mass-based nation-building. This despite the fact that, according to a Somaliland government report, in 1960 Somalia accounted for less than one percent of Somaliland’s trade, and barely any Somalilanders having ever been to Mogadishu.

Somaliland partially avoided the worst of Somalia’s negative clan politics by chance. Its clan structure is considerably less fractious than Somalia’s as a whole. The Isaaq demographically dominate its central core as well as its politics and economics. Furthermore, Somaliland’s experience during the brief union and later civil war — especially Siad Barre’s harsh prosecution of the war in the north — helped forge a strong Somaliland identity beyond the Isaaq that was the foundation of the declaration of independence on May 18, 1991.

The war also exiled significant numbers of Somalilanders whose remittances, trade connections, and interest to mobilize for peace help the country avoid self-destructive negative clan politics (it’s an indictment of Somali nationalists who carry the torch of Sayyid Mohammed Abdalla Hassan that they’ve never overcome the bastardization of clan identities for narrow political ends — by far the biggest obstacle to Somali state-building and economic development over the last two centuries).

While not particularly conducive to rapid economic growth and development, Somaliland’s political economy fosters peace and stability. Cross-border trade, financial services, and remittances are the mainstays of the economy, and have over the years proved valuable for coordinating elite-level convergence on peace among different factions as well as durable

political settlements. Key to this success has been the concentration of ownership, which in turn reduces transaction costs among economic elites. Pastoralism’s mass-level ethos of egalitarianism (reinforced by respect for elders and intra-communal self-policing) further reinforces elite-level commitments to the prevailing “managed democracy” (unfortunately, socio-political egalitarianism under low state capacity also entrenches tolerance of economic inequality

and under-development). The relatively small number of politically relevant clans (further reinforced by the constitutional limit of political organization to just three parties) also helps reduce transaction costs associated with enforcing intra-elite pacts. Constitutional restriction on the proliferation of parties — public votes for the three parties every decade — helps strengthen intra-coalition, stability, monitoring, and sanctioning.

III: There are good reasons to  
**To be continue next week**

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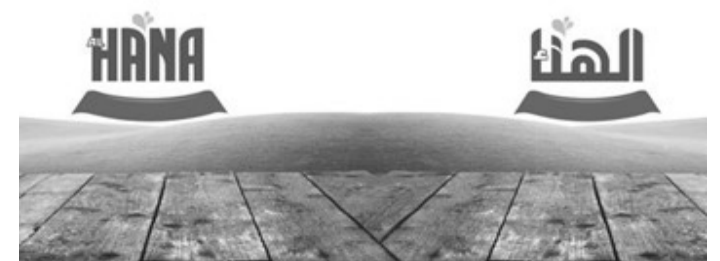
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