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Sights set on Somaliland:

The threat of a total US–UK–Israeli takeover

As Tel Aviv and Washington quietly court Somaliland as a destination for Gaza's displaced, this British-controlled enclave on the Red Sea emerges as both a strategic imperial launchpad and a potential open-air prison for Palestinians – armed, trained, and surveilled by London.



Photo Credit: The Cradle

In recent weeks, Somaliland has drawn unprecedented attention from western media. As Israeli and US officials scramble to find a destination to [forcibly relocate](#) Gaza's population, the globally unrecognized breakaway territory is increasingly floated as a potential solution. Multiple mainstream reports suggest Tel Aviv and Washington are making quiet overtures to Hargeisa. On 14 March, the [Financial Times](#) revealed:

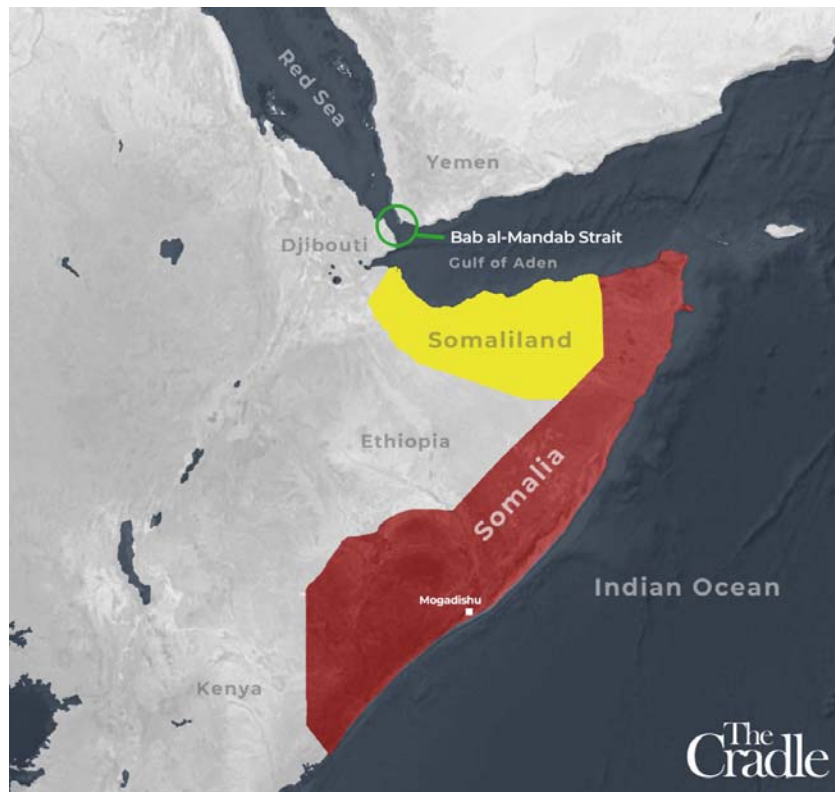
“A US official briefed on Washington's initial contacts with Somaliland's presidency said discussions had begun about a possible deal to recognize the de facto state in return for the establishment of a military base near the port of Berbera on the Red Sea coast.”

Somaliland's President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi has made international recognition his [central](#) foreign policy objective. Since the territory declared independence in 1991, no country has recognized it as a sovereign state. But late last year, before entering the White House, US President Donald Trump made the [surprise announcement](#) that he intended to officially recognize Somaliland, which would make Washington the first foreign capital to do so.

For the internationally isolated statelet, the prospect of a permanent US military footprint, which would shield the East African statelet from Somalia's [endemic instability](#), is no doubt enormously appealing, especially as it would be attached to official recognition of statehood by a major global power.

Search for a new 'Nakba'

From Washington's perspective, the deal would yield far more than just a convenient dumping ground for displaced Palestinians, evicted to make way for Trump's [fantasized](#) "Gaza-Lago." Somaliland's strategic location on the Red Sea makes it an ideal staging post for operations against Yemen.



A current map of the Horn of Africa.

Such a move would grant the US a critical new foothold in the Horn of Africa at a time when American and French forces are being [ejected](#) from countries across the continent at [breakneck speed](#).

It could also serve as a counterweight to China and Russia's expanding presence in northern Africa. Beijing [established](#) its first overseas military base in neighbouring Djibouti in 2017, and has since emerged as an [aggressive critic](#) of western policies in the region – while also welcoming Iranian naval vessels at its ports.

The strategic utility of recognizing Somaliland is not lost on Washington's foreign policy architects. [Project 2025](#) – a sprawling, right-wing policy blueprint by the Heritage Foundation, intended as a [roadmap](#) for Trump's second term—explicitly advocates “[countering] malign Chinese activity” in Africa. It specifically recommended “the recognition of Somaliland statehood as a hedge against the US's deteriorating position in Djibouti.”

Another neocolonial outpost

Keep in mind that Trump's interest in the territory was made public well before Somaliland was floated as a relocation site for Gaza's 2.4 million Palestinians. In [November 2024](#), former British defence secretary Gavin Williamson announced he had held “really good meetings” with Trump's “policy leads” on the matter, expressing confidence that recognition was on the horizon.

Williamson has long been an ardent advocate of Somaliland's independence, [regularly undertaking](#) all-expenses-paid trips to the breakaway territory, and receiving honorary citizenship for his [lobbying efforts](#).

Williamson's interest exposes a rarely acknowledged truth: Somaliland is, in practice, a modern British colony. Though it [claimed](#) independence from Somalia in 1991 and was [formally granted](#) independence by Britain in 1960, the territory remains under London's shadow.

Should Palestinians be forcefully relocated there, they would be trapped in yet another open-air prison – under the watchful eye of British-trained security forces with a long history of violent repression.

‘ASI Management’

In [April 2019](#), British government contractor Aktis Strategy abruptly declared bankruptcy, leaving staff unpaid and suppliers out of pocket, despite having secured tens of millions of pounds from the UK's Foreign Office for “development” programs across Africa and West Asia.

The [*Somaliland Chronicle*](#) published a detailed exposé on the company's collapse, which came while it was overseeing a "justice and security sector reform project" in the statelet.

Official records reveal that between 2017 and 2022, London allocated [over £18 million](#) (around \$23.5 million) to that project alone. It was one of many UK-financed schemes in the breakaway region that placed Somaliland's state architecture – government, military, judiciary, prisons, police, intelligence – under effective British management.

Internal files reviewed by *The Cradle* lay bare the extent of this control.

One document details how notorious British [intelligence cutout](#) Adam Smith International (ASI) provided "ongoing training and mentoring" to Somaliland's National Intelligence Agency and Rapid Response Unit, while managing the territory's forensics services, border surveillance, and even prosecution procedures via the Attorney General's Office. The British-created Counter-Terrorism Unit was established in 2012 with Foreign Office funds – "under ASI management."

Elsewhere, ASI boasts of its "proven history of establishing close professional relationships" with senior government, armed forces, police, "security sector," and Ministry of Defense officials. One file notes the contractor "deployed ex-UK military advisers" to train Somaliland's army and coastguard intelligence units, "[mentoring] senior officers in leadership, management, and military doctrine," and even drafted legislation later adopted as law.

Meanwhile, British contractor [Albany Associates](#) focused on teaching Somaliland's leaders the mechanics of propaganda and information warfare. Its mission: to train ministers and senior officials to generate a "steady flow of information" and proactively manage the media, in order to counter independent outlets.

It was noted that "unsatisfied public demand for information" from the government "on nationally significant events" gave independent information sources significant influence locally, which was to be countered at all costs.

In Somaliland, public distrust of their government was fueled by frequent arrests of journalists and media shutdowns, so Albany's role was to consolidate state control over information – ensuring one narrative, "one voice," no dissent.

Sub-Lots C1 & C2: ASI – Somaliland Military Intelligence & Defence Transformation Programme (MoD):

Successful development of Somaliland's security infrastructure contributes to the safeguarding of the national security of Somaliland, the UK and its partners. Instability in the Horn of Africa increases the threat to the UK from violent extremist groups. The 13,000 Somaliland Armed Forces (SAF) forms part of wider national security architecture in Somaliland that is well-established and very well known to ASI from our past and current work with the police and National Security Council. The Somaliland Coast Guard also comprises an intelligence unit, contributing to the organisation's responsibility to maintain a range of lookout stations along the coastline.

From 2013 until April 2015 ASI delivered a programme to undertake capacity assessments and deliver training to improve the capability and accountability of military intelligence units within the Somaliland Army and Coastguard. Through dialogue and collaborative work with selected Army and SCG staff we identified key gaps and deficiencies in defence and intelligence capabilities. We established that both the Somaliland Armed forces SAF as a whole and military intelligence in particular were in need of transformation support to improve command and accountability. ASI advisers provided technical advice to the Army Chief of Staff and the Head of the Coastguard on the organisation and accountability of their intelligence processes, including on how to develop co-ordination mechanisms with the Police and National Intelligence Agency. We deployed specialist ex-UK military advisers with a background in training and intelligence matters to develop and deliver training packages to officers in both SAF and SCG on how to create and manage intelligence cells. ASI advisers deliver over 1300 training days, attended by over 50 officers. As a result of our training SCG intelligence staff produced approximately 70 intelligence reports during 2014 (compared to 0 during 2013). These led directly to the SCG making four arrests involving human trafficking and illegal fishing. With the Ministry of Defence, ASI also assisted with the development of the new Officer Cadet course at the training headquarters at Dereweyene. Our advisers, experienced in similar activities in other FCAS environments, mentored senior officers in leadership, management and military doctrine, which fostered a new operational culture that gave due appreciation to human rights, the adherence to local laws, gender equality and the acceptance of oversight.

An official document reviewed by The Cradle.

A prison camp in waiting

While ASI touted its reforms, documents from another contractor – Coffey International – presented a more candid picture. Somaliland's military, the files noted, was “the largest and most costly institution of state,” yet evaded oversight, with its funds likely diverted for opaque ends. Accountability for military abuses was virtually nonexistent.

The police, meanwhile, had “a history of applying disproportionate force,” and no “dedicated public order unit.” Coffey proposed creating one within the Special Protection Unit – a paramilitary force protecting foreign organizations and their staff. At the time, the unit had no mandate for crowd control or responding to peaceful protests.

That July 2015 document recommended Somaliland police be trained in the UK by the National Police, covering human rights, crowd engagement, and first aid. The aim: instill “proportionality, lawfulness, [and] accountability” throughout Somaliland's police forces. Yet if this training occurred, it had no visible impact.

In late 2022, [mass protests](#) erupted in the contested city of Las Anod. Somaliland forces responded with lethal force, killing dozens. The crackdown escalated, and in 2023, Somaliland's military indiscriminately shelled the city. Amnesty International [described](#) the attack as “indiscriminate,” targeting schools, hospitals, and mosques, [displacing](#) hundreds of thousands and killing scores.

This is the context in which Somaliland appeals to Israel and its western patrons: a brutal, British-run security apparatus capable of extinguishing any form of dissent – ergo, the perfect dumping ground for Gazan refugees. If Washington establishes a base to launch strikes on Yemen, Palestinians could also be held hostage – literal human shields – to deter [reprisals](#) from the Ansarallah-aligned armed forces.

One can only hope this depraved plan collapses as [swiftly](#) as earlier US–Israeli schemes to expel Gazans to Egypt or Jordan.

The real question now is whether Somaliland's leaders are desperate enough for international recognition to trade their 34 years of independence for total US–UK–Israeli military, political, and security hegemony.

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