



Office of Intelligence and Analysis

**Homeland
Security**

Homeland Security Assessment

**(U//FOUO) Somalia: Patterns of Migration to the
United States**

15 February 2007

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(U) Scope

(U//FOUO) Tens of thousands of Somali nationals have migrated to the United States over the past 15 years to escape anarchy, clan and faction wars, and weather-induced famines. The recent fighting between the Somali Transitional Federal Government—with help from Ethiopian forces—and the Council of Islamic Courts (CIC) will produce another wave of refugees. The exodus of Somalis is likely to include individuals with ties to the collapsed CIC and other Islamic extremist groups.

(U//FOUO) The Somali refugees who have settled in the United States—thus far—are unlikely to conduct terrorist operations against the Homeland. The settled refugee population fits the pattern of victims seeking escape from persecution and does not appear to adhere to radical branches of Islam. At most, loyalty to Somalia-based clans or militia groups could manifest in some Somalis carrying out fundraising, criminal activities, and material support to extremist groups. Former CIC members and other extremists, however, if mingled with new arrivals coming to the United States, could settle among an accommodating population.

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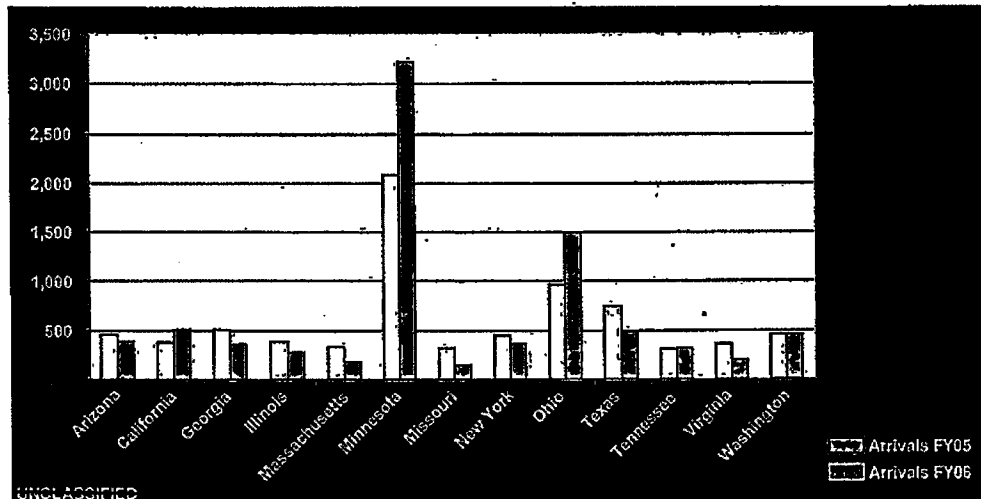
(U//FOUO) Somali Refugee Migration Rising Rapidly

(U//FOUO) Somalis constitute the largest share of refugee arrivals in the past several years. Somalis accounted for 25 percent of the 41,277 refugees from 68 nations that the United States processed in Fiscal Year (FY) 2006. Two months into FY 2007, Somali refugee admissions neared the 1,000 mark. Almost all Somali arrivals in the Homeland are refugees—only 417 Somalis received nonimmigrant visas in FY 2005, for example. The Somali refugee population in the United States now totals nearly 200,000.

(U//FOUO) Clustering and Activity in the United States

(U//FOUO) The largest share of Somali arrivals settled in Minnesota and Ohio (see Figure). Half of all Somalis in the United States live in Minnesota—mostly in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul metropolitan area. Somali immigration to the United States is based mostly on clan and familial social networks, with most retaining direct clan relationships back to Somalia. In addition to the draw of existing clan and family ties, Somali settlements also depend on the initiative of local resettlement agencies, employment opportunities, housing costs, and availability of financial assistance.

- (U//FOUO) Demographics data show a concentration of Somalis in Minnesota and Ohio; however, U.S. Government investigations and intelligence reporting do not indicate a correlated number of radical Islamic activities there.



(U//FOUO) Figure: Somali Refugee Settlement Venues, FYs 2006 and 2005.

(U//FOUO) Illicit Exploitation of Refugee Process

(U//FOUO) DHS/I&A assesses that the vast majority of Somali refugees would fit the pattern of prior years—victims of persecution seeking a safe haven. Yet, the increase in Somali refugee movement to the United States raises the prospect that refugee flows

could include Islamic extremists and militia in addition to others who join the Somali exodus under false pretenses.

- (U//FOUO) Chaotic recordkeeping since the collapse of the Somali Government is making it impossible to confirm the actual identity of most Somali applicants throughout the immigration process. In addition, reporting indicates that some naturalized U.S. citizens of Somali descent have traveled to Kenya to facilitate identity and passport fraud among Somali refugees in return for payment.

(U) U.S. Enforcement Actions

(U//FOUO) Because of reporting of widespread document fraud, the Department of State has declared Somali passports no longer valid for visa issuance. Up until now, however, Somalis have not been a critical target for U.S. enforcement actions.

- (U//FOUO) Fewer than 100 Somalis were found deportable in 2005, and only 17 were formally removed.
- (U//FOUO) DHS/Customs and Border Protection reports only 22 Somali apprehensions at U.S. borders in FY 2005 and 29 for FY 2006. Most occurred in the southwest border region, suggesting a possible illicit travel point of entrance.
- (U//FOUO) Over the past two fiscal years, DHS/Immigrations and Customs Enforcement initiated two dozen cases against Somalis for possible terrorism, criminal and illicit financial activity, and identity and benefit fraud. In FY 2005 almost half of these cases were in California; the FY 2006 cases were spread fairly evenly among 15 states.

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(U) Appendix

(U) Information Needs

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