



**Episode 1,453: How the US Regime Intensified the Somalian Famine: Forgotten History from the War on Terror**

**Guest: Scott Horton**

**WOODS:** All right, so here we are, episode number two of Scott Horton Week. Yesterday, we did an overview of where things stand in a bunch of countries. Now, let's go back and look at a little history. We're going to pick – in fact, I asked you to pick the countries, and you chose Somalia, which is interesting because it's not really, let's say, ground zero of the war on terror. And in fact, that's in a way what makes it interesting, is precisely that it doesn't seem to have much to do with anything, so it makes you wonder, maybe there's something more to American foreign policy than just protecting Americans from terrorism, and maybe there's some kind of other imperial ambition going on here. So let's start. You have an article that I'm going to link to on the show notes page, [TomWoods.com/1453](http://TomWoods.com/1453), about how US policies made the famine in Somalia worse. So let's talk about what began to happen. First of all, how did it come to be that Somalia was viewed as being a legitimate target in the context of the war on terror in the first place?

**HORTON:** Well, to jump kind of into the middle of it, and we can go back, but in 2006, when the very worst part of the war began, the US government's justification in *The Washington Post* was that there were three "al-Qaeda suspects" wanted for questioning by the FBI for their possible role in the USS *Cole* attack. And so of course, that predates September 11, before Dick Cheney and David Addington said: forget grand juries and cops; we're doing this all through the military and the CIA now. This was in the Clinton years' approach. And so these guys had been indicted, or at least they were wanted – I think they'd been indicted, or there was a grand jury looking into them, and the FBI "wanted them for questioning." And that was the excuse for helping the Ethiopians to launch a massive war, which shattered the place and has left it a warring husk of a land and certainly not really a country ever since. Have you ever heard of a pretext thinner than that?

**WOODS:** Yeah, I know. It's unbelievable. So then what do you think's really going on?

**HORTON:** Well, it's the Horn of Africa, right? The pointy part there in the east, right at the Bab-el-Mandeb, which is the gate of the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden.

**WOODS:** So it's a strategic location. That's what it is?

**HORTON:** That's absolutely right. It's the south end of the Red Sea. Suez Canal, that's the route to the Mediterranean there.

**WOODS:** So what's the US government's role there? I mean, if the CIA is – well, I'm going to let you tell the story. What's the US government's role, then, in Somalia? What exactly is it? Is it large scale, small scale? Is it covert? Overt? What is it?

**HORTON:** Well, at this point right now, there's a training mission, and there's also the Joint Special Operations Command, which is the highest tier special operations forces, and I assume some lower tier guys from SOCOM as well. And of course, there's also a CIA drone war, that is in coordination with them. But it's what Obama would call leading from behind. You know, America supports the African Union, which occupies the place with Kenyan, Ethiopian, and Burundian troops, and that kind of thing. So America pays for it all, and American soldiers aren't, at least most of the time, leading missions against Al-Shabab, but you know, they're directing – you know, white officers with native troops in the British style, essentially.

**WOODS:** What about the stuff that people remember from years and years ago, the whole *Black Hawk Down* stuff? What's the story there?

**HORTON:** Okay, well, so yeah, this gets to the heart of the narrative, really, and some terrible ironies coming up here. But essentially, George Bush Sr. in 1992 had launched this thing, Operation Restore Hope under the United Nations to provide food aid, because there was a civil war in the aftermath of the collapse of the communist regime there. And so the communists, just as everywhere else, had basically razed the society to the ground. I don't know what they had going on before that, but in the aftermath of communism, the place was divided up into warring factions, and people were starving. And so the Americans had launched this thing. Well, it ended up as a self-licking ice cream cone. As always and as anywhere, military intervention in other people's countries is a government program, and so it became the case that, you know what? Our UN peacekeepers say they need help, so we'll send in some Rangers, and this kind of thing. And it just kept growing and growing.

And they figured out that, you know, the real problem here is this warlord Aidid, and so what we need to do is get rid of him. And they had sent some Rangers and some Delta guys to go and get him. And it was actually after weeks and weeks of random shelling of Mogadishu by French, Belgian, and Italian troops, some of whom were later indicted by their own countries for war crimes – they left that part out of the movie, how the UN peacekeepers had been just randomly killing people for fun. There are pictures you can still see to this day of UN peacekeepers, I think these are the Belgian troops, holding a little boy, a Somali boy over a fire in a barrel, torturing him and forcing another one to eat worms at gunpoint, with a gun to his head and this kind of thing. And the UN tried to defend them, of course, but their own countries prosecuted them anyway.

So that was the lead-up to the actual *Black Hawk Down* attempt to get Aidid, which led to the deaths of I don't know how many Somalis and I think it was 17 American special operators, some of whose corpses were dragged through the street and that kind of thing. And Bill Clinton and his Pentagon wisely cut and ran right then and said, what the hell are we doing here anyway? It wasn't just Bill Clinton; it was the military wanted to go too, and they pulled out of there.

But so one little side note here is the father of one of the dead Rangers was one time interviewed on PBS *Frontline*, I think, and described meeting Bill Clinton and saying: Let me get this right. You were trying to negotiate with Aidid? And he goes, Yeah, that's right. And he goes, Yeah, but then you sent my son out to arrest him or to capture him or kill him at the

same time, so why is that? And the father said – I'll never forget this. The father said, "And Bill Clinton looked at me with the most blank stare I've ever seen a man's face and just said, 'Well, I don't know. I asked Tony Lake the same question.'" And that was his national security advisor. So it was just a government program, a total screw up. And this guy's son was killed for nothing.

But then the various warlords who had started to divide up the place, essentially through the '90s, without any further American intervention, or nothing major, anyway, that I know about – essentially all the different warlords pretty much fought each other to exhaustion. But right around the turn of the century – this is where the whole "libertarians should move to Somalia" thing comes from. It's not just that, oh, it's a stateless place and it's also a hellhole; it's that libertarians had praised Somalia's statelessness.

And in that article at the Future of Freedom Foundation that I wrote, I cite two articles. One is a study by an economist at George Mason, and the other one was an in-depth, very in-depth article for *Liberty* magazine, explaining how they had de facto anarchocapitalism; there was just nobody powerful enough to really try to gangsterize anything.

So the port of Mogadishu had no tariffs. It was wide open, and trade was at an all-time high. It had the fastest growing telecommunications infrastructure in Sub-Saharan Africa and whatever. All different measures of essentially their more ancient tribal structures of the elders and the old men and the imams and the natural grassroots authority from very local areas around the country, essentially ended up taking control of affairs, resolving disputes, and it was working out. It was really working great.

And so libertarians said: look, see, liberty works. Even in a place where they don't necessarily believe in liberty, where they've never heard of a Rothbard or even an Adam Smith or something, probably, but they have their own ways of doing things, and when there is no overriding authority there to distort the relationships between everyone else, things pretty much work themselves out in a compatible sort of a way.

But then, of course, back to our three wanted terrorists, you have supposedly some guys on the run there, and right after September 11th, which of course, no Somali had anything to do with, the Americans, essentially the neoconservatives, latched on to the supposed presence of this very small number of al-Qaeda terrorists inside Somalia, and used that as an excuse to send the Joint Special Operations Command – again, top tier special operations forces – and the CIA to Somalia in 2001. I mean, before they were done letting Osama escape, they were already deploying guys to Somalia.

And famously, Wesley Clark, the former Democrat presidential candidate and the butcher of Serbia from 1999 when he was Supreme Allied Commander of NATO, he tells that anecdote of going to the Pentagon after 9/11 and being confronted by a colonel, I guess, saying, "General, come in here and look at this." And it's a memo that must have been from Feith or Perle or Wolfowitz or something about the neocon target list. It came from Rumsfeld's office, anyway. And it said, we're going to attack seven countries. We're going to attack Iraq, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Sudan, Somalia, and what am I missing? I forgot. And anyway, and Somalia was on the list. And it was right there in the neocons' plan for their ultimate – oh, and Libya. Did I say Libya? It was right there on their plan for their ultimate regime change policy across the region, seven countries in five years. That was what they wanted to do with their ambition there in the time between 9/11 and the invasion of Iraq.

And so anyway, they sent CIA and JSOC there. Now, here's where it's just straight-up government program. We could be talking about the war on poverty or the war on illiteracy, or whatever government activity anywhere in the country, attempting to accomplish goals, where everything they do just makes matters worse and gives them a new excuse and makes matters worse, and gives them a new excuse until everything goes completely to hell. Welcome to America.

Okay, and so what happens is, the CIA backs these warlords, including, guess who, Tom: Aidid's son, the bad guy from *Black Hawk Down*. They say to his son: hey, we know you. You have a familiar name. Here's this giant stack of money and some weapons. Go and kill some Islamist jihadists for us. So the warlords say, okay, and they take the money and guns and of course do their own thing, and amass their own power. And so the balance of power is all completely skewed, right. And so they start taking advantage and going after all their enemies and building up their own power. And the more that they do that, of course, the more resistance builds up against them. And then the more that happens, the more the warlords come back to the CIA and say, Man, these Islamists are really fighting us hard. We need more money, and we need more guns. And this keeps escalating around and around, back and forth, back and forth, until about 2005.

And finally, something called the Islamic Courts Union, and it was quite literally a union, came into being as the government of Somalia. I should say, by the way, when you look at the map of Somalia, the entire kind of north fork there, that's all Puntland and Somaliland, and they have been basically been autonomous and fine and excluded from almost all of this. They're sort of the Free Somalia or something up there in the north. This is more all concerning the southern part of the country and the western part of the country and all that.

So anyway, the Islamic Courts Union comes into being, Tom, because as Randolph Bourne taught us, war is the health of the state. And so the people needed some kind of security force to defend them from the CIA-backed warlords, who were taking all this money and guns and committing crimes and doing all warlord things. So it really was like a grassroots, people-powered movement of 13 different groups – not to make them sound exactly like George Washington and friends, but it was 13 different groups came to declare independence from the American Empire and to fight off these warlords, and they succeeded. And they forced the warlords into Ethiopia, across the border and beat them.

But then, of course, Uncle Sam just went crazy and said you can't do that. And so then, in Christmas 2006, I think on Christmas morning, George Bush and Ethiopia, America and Ethiopia launched an invasion of Somalia. Now, Ethiopia is a Christian country, not a Muslim country, and they are historic enemies, these two. But so America hires Ethiopia to invade, and they do absolutely crush and destroy the Islamic Courts Union, scatter it to the winds, drive it out of power in the capital city and everything. They kill tens of thousands of people, commit mass atrocities, murders of men, women, and children, mass rapes, and every atrocity that America would accuse their enemies of in any other circumstance – see Libya or any other one – and including, they rounded up and tortured a bunch of people, extraordinary rendition and all of that, and including an American was caught up. At least one American was caught up in this rendition program and all this at the time.

And SOCOM, that's the second tier special operations forces, they were there at the initial invasion flying their C-130 gunships in there and blasting the hell out everything. CIA was involved, too, from the very beginning. And at this time, what had been the smallest,

weakest faction of the Islamic Courts Union, Al-Shabaab, the youth, who had basically shown up and then been silent while all the adults handled business and this kind of thing, now, they're the fighters. They're the youth. Who's going to resist the Ethiopians, the old men? So now Al-Shabaab, which was nothing, they're the Minutemen. They're the local militia to rise up to fend off the Ethiopian invasion sponsored by the United States. And that was how al Shabaab became a fighting force in the first place.

Now, they fought the American-backed Ethiopia for two years to a stalemate. You still with me here? Am I interesting? You get it?

**WOODS:** Yeah, no, I'm following completely.

**HORTON:** Okay, great. So then George Bush is running out of time, right, just like the Iraqis told him, Okay, you've got to go, pal, in more ways than one. See ya. Here comes 2009 and the Democrats, and Bush has to go, so what's he going to do? So he has Condoleezza Rice —

**WOODS:** He makes a deal. By the way, I know where this is going, because I had the good fortune of reading your article. So I already know where it goes.

**HORTON:** Oh, that's true, too. I just wanted to make sure I wasn't boring you to tears over there and you were dying to cut in or something.

**WOODS:** Well, I do have to cut in at some point, because I —

**HORTON:** Oh, yeah, well, I'm getting right to the big thing, and then you can get in from there. So Condoleezza Rice makes a deal, and she says, You know what, Islamic Courts Union? No hard feelings. You can go ahead and be the government of Somalia after all. Only thing is, you can't call yourselves the Islamic Courts Union. You have to take the Transitional National Government that the US and the United Nations have created for you. You have to fit within that. Well, guess what. The leadership of the Islamic Courts Union said, Okay, we'll compromise and go for that. But guess what. Al-Shabaab, the youth, said, You guys are a bunch of treasonous traders for selling out to Condoleezza Rice, and we'll fight you too.

And it turns out — and this is on page 222, of Jeremy Scahill's book *Dirty Wars*, where they quote the State Department saying, Oh, yeah, you know — and this is maybe a little bit after the fact, kind of 20/20, or not 20/20, but after-the-fact spin. But either way, they say, You know what? We actually knew that we weren't going to be able to really defeat these guys. We just wanted to bring them down a peg. We just wanted to weaken them a little bit. And so here, they had launched this horrible war that had killed tens of thousands of people already, and they say, Yeah, well, we just wanted to weaken their stance, essentially, was the only reason they had done it. But the war has continued rage on this whole time. And then I guess here's where we start getting to the famine, but go ahead.

**WOODS:** All right, well, I want to know what — all right, so Bush is on his way out. They arrange this deal. How does policy change under Obama? Because of course, we're supposed to think that there's going to be significant change, because wasn't that Obama's slogan, after all?

**HORTON:** He didn't do a thing about it except have it continue. I mean, if anything, he escalated the drone war there. I wouldn't say he escalated support –

**WOODS:** But who's he targeting in that drone war?

**HORTON:** Al-Shabaab.

**WOODS:** Ah, okay.

**HORTON:** And then so this is fast-forwarding a little bit, but in 2012, the Kenyans invaded the port city of Kismayo in the Somali south and forced Al-Shabaab out of there. Well, at that point, they lost a major source of revenue, which was essentially black market charcoal, just mass burning-down forests and then selling the charcoal and clear cutting and this kind of thing. And when they got cut off from that source of financing, it was only then that they turned to the Saudi princelings and declared their loyalty to al-Qaeda.

So now they're called al-Qaeda terrorists, and Tulsi Gabbard will be the first one to tell you, we have to fight them forever, because they're Islamic terrorists and all this stuff. But they're not Saudis. They have their own culture and their own ways of doing things, and they have no reason to fight – or at least not that they've apparently noticed – no reason to fight any international jihad against us. They are local militiamen fighting to keep foreigners out of their country, which is right now occupied by three foreign nations, which is all supported by – or really four – and supported by the fourth there, the USA, world empire, the superpower, number one, against the weakest country ever.

So it doesn't mean that Al-Shabaab are good guys. I mean, they commit atrocities against civilians and all kinds of things here. It's just that they are essentially fighting – essentially, in the broadest sense, they are fighting in defense of their land from foreign invaders who have no right whatsoever to be there. That's us. And again, they only rose up in opposition to our intervention in the first place. Before that, they were nothing.

**WOODS:** So how does the famine fit into this, and to what extent is the famine just something that occurs spontaneously, and to what extent is it aggravated by these other conditions?

**HORTON:** Right, which is exactly the right question. So if you go to Mises.org, you can find I don't know how many different articles explaining how capitalism has abolished the famine, because no matter how bad the weather gets near you, markets will provide. You've got something to trade, someone will bring you fresh strawberries from around the world, if the price is right, anyway. But so how's that negated in East Africa, especially when, as I said, the place was pretty much a blooming capitalist system there before this massive intervention. And the thing is, it's the war. In 2009, the weather turned really bad, and in Ethiopia and in Kenya and Somalia, they all suffer this major drought, and Eritrea and that whole area of the Horn of Africa.

And the Somalis laid down and died by the hundreds of thousands. In these other countries, the markets were able to compensate. Not the most sophisticated economies in the world, okay, but enough. But in Somalia, the farmers hadn't been able to sow their crops because of all the chaos, and the ones who had hadn't been able to harvest, and the ones who had didn't have the ability to transport their food to the market, and there was no market to transport

the food to, and there were no customers with any money to buy any food. The whole entire system of distribution of food for the people completely broke down. As I put it in the article, the bad weather couldn't have picked a worse war to intervene in. These people had no safety cushion at all when the sun came and joined the war on America's side against them.

And so according to FuseNet, which was backed by the US and Britain and did not put this out as some cry for further intervention or anything like that, according to their surveys – and this was back in the beginning of 2013, about that earlier famine. There's been not as bad, but there have been continuing hunger problems there ever since, of course, as well. But they wrote back then that 4.6% of the total population, and 10%, Tom, of the children under five died in southern and central Somalia between October 2010 and April 2012. It's now estimated by them that more than a quarter of a million people died, more than half of them, that is at least 125,000 of them, children

And here's the thing, man. This is one of those s\*\*\*hole countries, right, where, *Those barbarians, they never figured out how to do things right and this and that.* But they didn't all lay down and die in Ethiopia, and they didn't all lay down and die 125,000 dead children in Kenya. It was America's war that did this to them.

And think about it like this. When Lehman Brothers goes out of business, us libertarians rightfully point at the US government first, and we go, Lehman may have their problems, but the US government is the world empire. The US government is the commissar of the bubble, you know, the currency and therefore the bubble, and so, Mises says malinvestment is Uncle Sam's fault first. Well, you know what? If that's true for Lehman Brothers, who if anybody ought to know better, it would be these Masters of the Universe up there on the top of Mount Olympus or whatever.

Well, then that same standard should apply, then, to poverty and to crime and to every social ill that we have. The first question we should ask is: what is the US government's responsibility for creating this crisis in the first place? Doesn't mean everything is their fault, and it doesn't mean that other people then are no longer responsible for the things that they are in fact responsible for. But it just means, you look at who is the most powerful actor involved and what is their role first. And if we're going to do that for Lehman Brothers, then that's the way we need to approach the crisis in Somalia.

What does it mean when the most powerful society, the most powerful nation state that has ever existed, is picking on the weakest little group of helpless people that you could possibly find anywhere in the world? And for nothing, for not doing anything to us, ever, for never dreaming of it. It's crazy. It makes me sound crazy just to tell the truth about it. That, *How could it be that bad? If it was true, then wouldn't I already be upset about this? But I've never even heard of it before* – which is almost even the way you introduced the show. It was like, Somalia, what's going on there? What's going on there is as bad as Iraq War II. What's going on there is as bad as the genocide in Yemen. What's going on there is Navy SEALs killing people right now for nothing.

**WOODS:** You know, I had somebody ask me in my private group, Scott, if at the end of these, we can say something about what Americans can do about these situations, but I don't know what you can do. I mean, you can publicize it. You can tell people about it. But when push comes to shove, you get a really, really anti-empire candidate like Tulsi Gabbard, and everybody ignores her.

**HORTON:** Yeah.

**WOODS:** It's very demoralizing.

**HORTON:** And even she's horrible on this stuff. I mean, her thing is –

**WOODS:** Oh, is she really? Tell me.

**HORTON:** Okay, very simple. I'll try to say this really fast. She is very wisely – and I'm very grateful for this. She's very wisely against wars *for* terrorism, such as, as we've discussed a million times, Obama and Clinton and Brennan's high treason in Syria for five years, backing al-Qaeda until it turned into the Islamic State over there. Okay, but any fool ought to be against that. But then she turns right around and says, But the War *on* Terrorism, I'm a hawk. So she says she doesn't – she's also good on regime changes against secular dictators. She doesn't want to do that. But I don't know if she'd still back them, which is not any better than overthrowing them – well, it's a little better than overthrowing them, but not much.

But when it comes to, say, for example, the drone war in Yemen against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, or the drone war in Pakistan against al-Qaeda there, which we discussed on the show the other day, or the drone war against Al-Shabaab in Somalia – you know what she did? She put out a thing actually a few weeks ago, where she listed just this very small handful of groups. She goes, look, there's still al-Qaeda in Idlib province in Syria. There's still al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula in Yemen. There's still Al-Shabaab in Somalia. And then she finishes with, "There are hundreds of these groups around" – which is just a lie. I mean, that is the kind of crap you'd hear from George W. Bush when he's just making up stuff, or like Donald Trump when he takes the lie that Iran killed 600 Americans in Iraq War II and then magically turns it into 2,000 now. Almost half of them, huh? Whatever. This is just absolute garbage. And she blames it on radical Islam when it's not that; it's radical politics, which are driven by American mass murder campaigns for the last 40 years. Everybody knows that.

**WOODS:** When you say "everybody knows that," the problem is they don't. Don't you think, ultimately?

**HORTON:** You know what it is, Tom? And this is the point of the book, right, is I'm borrowing from so many other people who wrote all this truth before me. All the deal is every bit of this is known, and if I tell you, Ronald Reagan backed Saddam Hussein in the '80s against Iran, you'll go, *Yeah, I knew that. I think we all know that.* But what you don't have is somebody to put it all together in a row for you.

**WOODS:** Right, yeah, exactly.

**HORTON:** And that's what I'm going to do for you.

**WOODS:** Yeah, that's exactly what we need done. So, folks, this is – I feel like it's a telethon. You know, this is like a telethon. If only we had video, we could have a ticker-tape –

**HORTON:** Save the Somalis.

**WOODS:** Yeah, right, exactly.

**HORTON:** And give your money to me.

**WOODS:** [laughing] I do want people to go over to [TomWoods.com/Horton](http://TomWoods.com/Horton). Help make this project a reality, because I mean, just the stuff we've heard today is just the tip of the iceberg, because Somalia is not even the center of all this. And just here alone, there's information most people don't have and know nothing about, and yet needs to be known. So go over there and support Scott at [TomWoods.com/Horton](http://TomWoods.com/Horton).