

# U.S. policy falling short in Somalia

By Bill Fletcher Jr.

Special to Sentinel-Voice

They are doing it again. It has been reported that the Bush administration is supporting Somali warlords in their quasi-civil war against alleged Islamist militias. In the name of fighting terrorism, the Bush administration has apparently decided to secretly support a self-proclaimed anti-terrorist coalition of Somali warlords. Thus, Somalia is plunged back into further military conflict at precisely the time when the interim government has been desperately trying to secure a lasting peace.

U.S. involvement in the Somali conflict is made even more problematic in light of the objections of the Somali interim government. The interim government has asked the Bush administration for support in stabilizing the situation there after nearly 15 years of on-again/off-again military conflict among clans (following the overthrow of the U.S. puppet Siad Barre). Instead, the Bush administration has decided that covert intervention

is the better course, such that Somalia is now experiencing some of the worst fighting it has seen in more than a decade.

It has been said that a mark of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. If that is the case, then there is chronic insanity afoot in Washington, D.C. In the 1980s, the U.S. got involved in the Afghanistan conflict after the then-Soviet Union invaded the country. Paying no attention to who was involved in the fighting or the long-term consequences of involvement, the U.S. and Saudi Arabia recruited, trained and equipped what came to be known as the mujahideen (Islamic freedom fighters). Some of these same mujahideen later became the core of Al Qaeda, focusing their hatred on the U.S. when they saw it abandon Afghanistan. On another front, the U.S. supplied Saddam



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Hussein with weapons of mass destruction such that he could carry out his war against Iran in the 1980s, turning a blind eye when he actually used these weapons killing soldiers and civilians. The list can go on and on, but the pattern becomes clear. In any immediate situation, U.S. foreign policy is driven by a narrow and shortsighted

sense of what can and should be done. Further, the U.S. feels no reluctance at being unilateral in its actions, regardless of the consequences.

And "consequences" is what Somalia is finally all about. The Somali warlords have shown themselves to be completely unsavory. They have agreed repeatedly to various truces and settlements, only to reopen hostilities before the ink is dry on the agreement. What can the Bush administration anticipate coming out of such a situation?

The circumstances in Somalia are reminiscent of something else unfolding in Africa that I have addressed in the past. The U.S. is carrying out military assistance projects in the Sahel region (around the Sahara) for various countries to combat terrorism. Sounds like a good idea? Perhaps in the abstract, but not in reality, because terrorism is not a major problem in Africa. Africa has a whole set of problems, but terrorism is not a major one. Yet the Bush administration in single-mindedly pursuing its war against terrorism has decided that Africa must be a front in that struggle. Thus, at a time when Africa needs to de-militarize, the Bush administration is helping a host of nations, with governments that are a real mixed bag, further militarize. Instead of studying the situation and determining how the USA can help, the Bush administration fits the facts to back up its already established policies.

And so, Somalia burns...

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## GOP pinning hopes on Black candidates

BOWIE, Md. (AP) - Hope springs eternal when Black Republicans seek higher office, yet often the first question that hits them is what they are doing in the GOP. This election year, a man named Steele in Maryland and a former football star named Swann in Pennsylvania are among a small but determined number of Black candidates trying to win one for the Republicans, despite

the Democratic Party's near lock on the Black vote.

Republican Lt. Gov. Michael Steele, a former seminarian with a law degree from Georgetown University, is seeking the open Senate seat in November. He is looking to translate one accomplishment — the first Black elected to statewide office in Maryland — into another, as the only Black Republican in the Senate.

Lynn Swann, a Hall of Famer with the Pittsburgh Steelers in the 1970s, is running for governor in Pennsylvania.

Black Republicans also are seeking the governorship in Ohio, the Senate in Michigan and seats in Congress and state legislatures from the Midwest to the Deep South.

It's never easy.

"Sometimes you feel kind

of out there on an island by yourself," said Eric Wallace, 47, an associate minister of a large Black congregation in Chicago who is running for the state Senate in Illinois.

"Sometimes when I tell people I'm a Republican, they just automatically shut down and don't want to hear any more," Wallace said.

"But when I start talking about our views — we're not for abortion, we're pretty much against same-sex marriage — they start listening."

As Steele has discovered in the Maryland suburbs outside Washington, getting on the ballot is only one step in an arduous journey.

In Prince George's County, which has the nation's most affluent majority-Black population, barber Kevin Walker shrugged off the GOP effort to get voters like him to consider Republican candidates.

"I'm a Democrat. It was the way I was raised," said Walker, 21, who is Black.

He was hardly impressed with Steele's stature as No. 2 official in Maryland since 2003, or the possibility that Steele could become only the second Black sitting senator. Democrat Barack Obama of Illinois was elected in 2004.

Asked whether he would vote for Steele, Walker shook his head. "Doubt it," he said, and went back to trimming hair.

It is that chilly reception that Republicans are trying to change.

After decades of trying to sway Black voters, targeting a growing Black middle class and the social conservatism

of many churchgoing Blacks, the GOP has gotten only weak results.

In 2000, George W. Bush got 7 percent of the Black vote in his successful presidential campaign. Four years later, 11 percent of Black voters cast ballots for President Bush.

Since 2004, Republicans have recruited 10,000 Black "team leaders" to spread the GOP message to their churches and communities. The party also put on its first-ever minority candidate training seminar this spring in Washington. This summer, the GOP will start an internship program to reach out to minority voters and recruit candidates.

In Pennsylvania, Republicans tapped Swann to challenge Democratic Gov. Ed Rendell. The 54-year-old former football standout has captured headlines but trails in the polls. Swann has ventured into poor Black neighborhoods where GOP candidates have never visited and seen a willingness to consider Republican ideas.

"It's important for people to know that I'm not running for governor as a placeholder for the Republican Party or to be a poster child for diversity," he said. "I'm running to win."

In other races:

-In Ohio, Secretary of State Kenneth Blackwell, a Black GOP conservative, is running for governor. He alienated some Blacks in the 2004 presidential election when he ordered that provisional ballots in Ohio be issued only to voters who went

to their correct polling places. The decision was seen in some quarters as discouraging Democratic turnout.

On primary night this month in the state, Blackwell also came under criticism for issuing confusing orders on releasing election results.

-In Michigan, the Rev. Keith Butler is one of three Republicans who will face off in the Aug. 8 primary for the chance to take on Democratic Sen. Debbie Stabenow. Butler racked up several endorsements and more than \$1.4 million in cash before Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard, who is White, entered the race in October, stealing some of Butler's momentum. Polls show Stabenow comfortably leading all three in hypothetical matchups.

In Maryland, Democrats outnumber Republicans 2-to-1, and the state has the largest percentage of Black voters outside the South. Steele, 47, realizes that he has to explain himself when he seeks Black votes.

"I grew up in a Democratic household," he told students at largely Black Howard University in Washington. "My parents were Roosevelt Democrats, had been all their lives. My mom, when I told her I was a Republican, asked me, 'Why?' That was the extent of that conversation."

He told the students a study of the past led him to the party of Abraham Lincoln.

"I researched the history (See Candidates, Page 13)

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the votes that are cast.

So what does all of this mean for Black people? When the results are in from the past six years, as well as what looks to be eight years, there will be tremendous economic consequences and hardships for those at the bottom of society's heap. Blacks are definitely at the bottom of the heap, and the lessons we see everyday are a warning for us to get our collective act together, that is, if we really care about one another.

We must put an immediate end to frivolous spending and save some of our money. I know we have to spend just about every penny we get our hands on just to make ends meet, but somehow we must find ways to cut our expenses and increase our revenues. We must look for ways to work collectively on economic initiatives, such as cooperative purchasing, food co-ops, small business associations, bartering programs; rotating credit groups, e.g., informal credit and savings, like susus of African communities; mutual support, consumer-business partnerships; entrepreneurial education for our youth and, yes, doing what other groups have done in this country: turn all of those illegal enterprises into legitimate businesses. Stop doing wrong, and do right.

Things are too critical for us to merely continue having dialogues and conversations about the problems; it's way past time to implement the solutions. Our children's future is at stake. The value of a dollar is drop-

ping fast against the euro, and more countries are considering accepting euros for their oil rather than the vaunted "petrodollar." If foreigners get nervous and start dumping their dollars back into this country, we could see hyperinflation like we have never seen before.

Black and poor people might end up with baskets of dollars that aren't worth the paper they're printed on; remember Germany and Argentina?

Haven't Bush and his cronies made enough money? Haven't they done enough to us for us to realize that we are the ones who must change, knowing they are not about to? Why would any rational, conscious, self-loving Black person want anything to do with this guy? Money, you say? Oh yeah, I forgot about those so-called faith-based grants. Those hoodwinked preachers and those who go along with their eyes wide open, fully aware of what they are doing, should read Ecclesiastes 5:10: "Whoever loves money never has enough." They also need to come to their senses about their mortality as well.

The mess from the west has wreaked economic havoc in this country. But that was the plan all along, wasn't it? Are you going to act now to defend yourselves against this scourge, or will you wait until the next election to simply cast a vote that may not even be counted? It's your move, Black America.

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