

HENRY C. "HANK" JOHNSON, JR.
4TH DISTRICT, GEORGIA

COMMITTEES:
JUDICIARY
ARMED SERVICES

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1004

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AND CAPABILITIES
STRATEGIC FORCES

February 10, 2015

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry,

On February 6, 2015, 12 U.S. senators and members of the House of Representatives wrote to you requesting a meeting to discuss the development of an emergency plan to address the acute shortage of lifesaving money transmission services to Somalia, and to discuss how we can develop a long-term framework for facilitating lawful transfers through transparent channels. I am writing to echo the importance of a meeting on this critical issue that affects many of my constituents.

This meeting is urgent. On February 6th, 2015, the largest financial institutions currently providing wire transfer services to money services businesses serving Somalia began closing their accounts amid concerns that the institution is unable to adequately manage the risks associated with its remittance accounts serving countries in Africa, Central and Eastern Europe, and parts of Asia. Thus, money service businesses serving Somali-Americans have begun the process of closing branches or drastically reducing the volume of remittances they are transmitting. Last year, according to an international NGO, more than \$215 million was sent from the U.S. to Somalia, most of which was used to meet basic humanitarian needs, and there are few practical substitute mechanisms left for transmitting remittances.

One-third of Somali families say they would not be able to afford basic food, medicines and school fees without help from their relatives abroad. Nearly all business startups in Somalia are funded by remittances, and with nearly three million Somalis already dependent on aid organizations, eliminating the ability to send money into Somalia could throw the country and its already vulnerable economy deeper into crisis.

Decreased remittances would also present greater security risks. As Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud has said, cutting off money from the diaspora could significantly strengthen the appeal of terrorism and piracy for young Somali men. A disruption in remittances could

WASHINGTON OFFICE
2240 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
PHONE (202) 225-1605
FAX (202) 226-0691

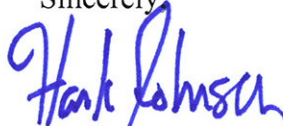
DISTRICT OFFICE
5700 HILLDALE DRIVE, SUITE 120
LITHONIA, GA 30058
PHONE (770) 987-2291
FAX (770) 987-8721

reverse the limited gains that the Somali government and the international community have made to rid Somalia and the greater Horn of Africa of terrorism.

Somalis urgently need a solution. I call on the appropriate agencies, in collaboration with community and industry partners, to formulate short- and long-term plans to keep the remittances pipeline open. For example, the State Department might be able to provide temporary remittances channels through its humanitarian programs. Financial regulators could be enlisted in efforts to facilitate solutions that build on the recommendations of State and the NSC, preserving the integrity of U.S. counterterrorism and anti-money laundering efforts while keeping open remittance pipelines through private or public mechanisms. Together, banking regulators could, if necessary, then promulgate formal joint guidance. The Federal Reserve Bank of New York could use its wire transfer service to provide remittances. The World Bank -- which has done so much over the years to reduce the costs of remittances from immigrant workers in the U.S. to their family members at home -- might be enlisted to help facilitate these efforts. All of these possibilities, and other creative alternatives, should be explored to find a solution to this crisis.

To protect our national security and avoid exacerbating a humanitarian crisis, we must identify an emergency solution to prevent the disruption of remittances to Somalia. We believe it is critical that every federal agency with jurisdiction on this issue must work toward formulating a sustainable framework for remittance payments as quickly as possible. We appreciate your attention to this issue, and we hope we will be able to meet with representatives of your agencies in the coming weeks.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Hank Johnson". The signature is stylized, with the first name "Hank" written in a cursive-like script and the last name "Johnson" in a more formal, slightly cursive script.

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson
Member of Congress