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General

Somalia is located on the E coast of Africa and, with Ethiopia and Djibouti, is often referred to as the Horn of Africa.

The country is bounded on the N by the Gulf of Aden, on the E and S by the Indian Ocean, on the NW by Djibouti, and on the W by Ethiopia and Kenya.

The N part of the country is hilly, with elevations of up to 2,100m, while the central and S parts are flat and low.

The Guiba River and the Scebeli River rise in Ethiopia and flow S across Somalia; however, the latter river does not reach the ocean. Much of the country is arid, although rain is more adequate in the S part.

Buoyage System

The IALA Buoyage System (Region A) is in effect. See Chart No. 1 for further IALA Buoyage System information.

Cautions

Mariners are advised that acts of piracy and armed robbery by armed borders are occurring off the coast of Somalia. Several incidents have been reported (2002) by vessels up to 40 miles off the coast.

Vessels are advised to keep at least 50 miles and, if possible, 100 miles from the coast of Somalia. Radio communications, including the use of VHF, should be kept to a minimum while in Somali waters.

Currency

The official unit of currency is the Somali shilling, consisting of 100 cents.

Government

The Somali Republic achieved independence on July 1, 1960 from a merger of the former British Somaliland and the former Italian Somaliland. In 1969, Mohammed Siyad Barre took power in a coup and formed a Supreme Revolutionary Council, renaming the country the Somali Democratic Republic. Civil war involving many factions followed until a United Nations (UN) sponsored truce was signed in 1992. Troops from the USA and several other countries mounted a UN mission to aid famine victims.

In 1993, the warring factions, 15 in number, agreed to form a National Transitional Council. However, after a number of UN troops were attacked and killed, all UN forces were withdrawn by 1995. The principal insurgent group in the N part of the country declared the secession of an independent state based on the territory of the former British protectorate, with a capital



Flag of Somalia

at Hargeisa and a port at Berbera. Factional fighting started in Hargeisa in 1994 and forces in the S launched a campaign to reoccupy this area.

The country has no functioning government. The present political situation is one of anarchy, marked by interfactional fighting and banditry.

A transitional 245-member National Assembly was created at the Arta Peace Conference in Djibouti in 2000. The National Assembly elected an interim President and was mandated to create a new constitution and hold elections within 3 years.

The legal system is based on Islamic law.

The capital is Mogadishu (Mogadiscio).

Holidays

The following holidays are observed:

Labor Day	May 1
Independence Day of Northern Regions	June 26
Independence Day of Southern Regions	July 1

Revolution Days

October 21-22

Islamic holidays, which are subject to the appearance of the moon, include Eid Al-Fitr (End of Ramadan), Eid Al-Adha (End of Pilgrimage), Hijrah (Islamic New Year), Ashoora, and the Prophet's Birthday.

Industries

Somalia is mainly a pastoral country. The principal agricultural products are livestock, bananas, sugarcane, cotton, and cereals.

There are a few small industries, including sugar and oil refining, fish and meat canning, textiles, and mining.

Languages

The official languages are Somali and Arabic. English and Italian are also extensively used.

Time Zone

The Time Zone description is CHARLIE (-3). Daylight Savings Time is not observed.

World Time Zone Chart

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/ref/pdf/802801.pdf>

U.S. Embassy

The U.S. Embassy in Mogadishu was closed in 1991. U.S. interests are managed by the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya.

U. S. Embassy Kenya Home Page

<http://usembassy.state.gov/nairobi>