

'Caring imperialism' won't save Somalia from war and famine

by Joseph Brewda

As the first of some 28,000 U.S. troops arrived in Somalia in time for Pearl Harbor Day, questions naturally arose as to what agenda the Bush administration is really intent on following in its latest and last U.N.-authorized foreign adventure. In his Dec. 4 address to the nation, George Bush reported that "Operation Restore Hope" is intended "to secure the environment that will allow food to get to the starving people of Somalia." Such pious pronouncements, together with the images of deserts and combat jets broadcast on Ted Koppel's "Nightline," certainly give one a sense of *déjà vu*.

Of course, the situation in Somalia is desperate, as this magazine, and a few honest relief agency professionals, have been warning, especially since December 1991. A three-year drought, the U.S.-approved January 1991 ouster of Somali dictator Siad Barre, and the subsequent bloody clan warfare beginning in the summer of 1991, have killed some 500,000 people from the combined effects of war and famine. According to American Red Cross international director Gerald Jones, speaking before Congress in September, at least 1.5 million Somalis of the country's 6-8 million people are at risk of starvation, and another 4.5 million need some form of assistance. "The malnourished," he reported, "account for 95% of the population."

This developing situation was well-known to the Bush administration at least a year ago, and probably for much longer. But it did nothing. Moreover, this past fall, the head of the U.N. relief operation in Somalia, Algerian diplomat Mohammad Sahnoun, resigned his post, claiming that relief efforts were being sabotaged. The question arises: Why this sudden professed concern now?

It seems that the primary purpose of the intervention lies in military-strategic concerns relating to the Indian Ocean, and efforts to eradicate the notion of national sovereignty from international law. At the same time, the United States, Great Britain, France, and Italy want to reintroduce outright colonialism into Africa.

There is nothing wrong, in itself, with deploying troops in Somalia as part of a genuine relief effort; and in fact, engineering corps operations could be particularly useful. But if the U.S. intervention is not to be an imperialist venture under humanitarian cover, the following emergency measures must be carried out:

- Food and supply warehouses must be established directly in the middle of the famine zones. Forcing tens of thousands of starving people to walk hundreds of miles to "feeding stations" is one of the hidden ways that governments and relief agencies often intentionally kill populations.

- Somalia's ravaged infrastructure must be restored. This will require an investment of billions of dollars, together with the creation of new rail, power, and water-management systems. Once known as "Aden's butcher shop" for its role in supplying animal protein to British forces in Yemen, Somalia has a vast food production potential. According to a U.N. development program study, the region between the Juba and Shabeelle rivers (see map), now at the center of the famine, could produce enough food to sustain 50 million people. Nearby Sudan, meanwhile, is one of the great potential breadbaskets of the world, which could easily feed all of Africa. It is therefore also urgent that Sudan receive massive investment for this reason.

- Somalia's \$2.2 billion international debt must be canceled, along with the \$275 billion debt of the rest of the continent, as a necessary precondition for Africa's rapid industrialization.

Policing the Indian Ocean

One of the more obvious purposes of the U.S. deployment is to enhance American military domination of the Indian Ocean, Persian Gulf, and Red Sea. It was largely for such reasons that France, Italy, and Britain colonized Somalia over 100 years ago.

While U.S. National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft has claimed that the troops will be out by Bill Clinton's Jan. 20 inauguration as U.S. President, Pentagon officials are leaking that the operation will take months. Since one of the stated purposes of the mission is to disarm the warring clans, it is hard to imagine otherwise. The fact that Italy, southern Somalia's former overlord, has provocatively also sent troops, is sure to generate some armed resistance, and a pretext for a continuing presence.

The installation of a new puppet government for Somalia is plainly one intent of the operation. One of its first orders of business, it appears, will be to authorize the restoration of the U.S. naval base in Berbera in the north, and the U.S.

utilization of former Soviet naval bases in Mogadishu and Kismayu in the south. The bases will be part of a network including Diego Garcia, south of India, and the new bases the United States and Britain have been establishing in the Persian Gulf.

One purpose for such bases is the targeting of Europe and Japan. The next administration is certain to have an even more aggressive trade war policy against Japan and continental Europe than even the Bush administration. Beefing up the U.S. naval presence in the Indian Ocean and adjacent waters allows the interdiction, under various pretexts, of both European trade to Asia, and Mideast oil supplies to Europe and Japan.

Also, the Anglo-Americans seem to think it is necessary to dominate the Indian Ocean as part of a policy of preventing Russia's reemergence as a world power.

Closely related to such concerns is a strategic policy that had been proclaimed by Carter administration official Zbigniew Brzezinski as the "Arc of Crisis," a policy of inflaming North Africa, the Mideast, West Asia, and the Indian subcontinent "arc" bordering what was then the Soviet Union. The architect of the Carter plan, British intelligence official Prof. Bernard Lewis, published an article in the fall issue of *Foreign Affairs* arguing that the plan should continue, but should be extended to include the former Soviet Central Asian republics. "Lebanonization," Lewis stated—i.e., bloody civil war—will be the characteristic of the region over the coming period. One of Lewis's main aides had been Carter's undersecretary of state Warren Christopher, today the head of Clinton's transition team.

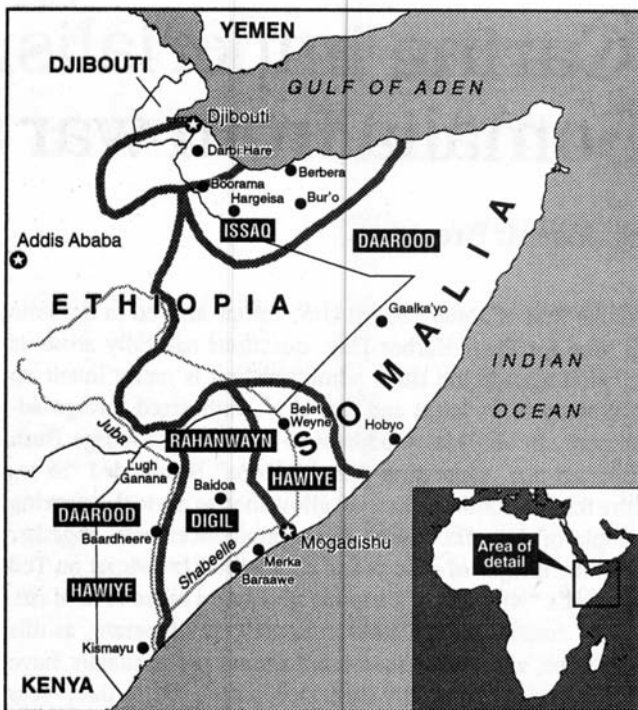
By occupying Somalia, the U.S. administration intends to establish yet another base for fostering civil and regional wars—for example, a repeat of the 1977 Ethiopian-Somalia war which the Carter administration had earlier orchestrated. Somalia also represents a stepping-stone for an assault on Sudan, now emerging as an important target, and also a possible intervention into Yemen. The Anglo-Americans also seem to be intent on fostering an Egyptian-Sudanese war.

Limiting sovereignty

Probably the most important reason for the intervention, however, is to formalize a new doctrine restricting the scope of national sovereignty in international law. The change is needed to facilitate the reintroduction of European, and now American, colonialism in Africa and elsewhere, first in the guise of establishing U.N. trusteeships, and later more overtly.

This aspect of the intervention was labeled "caring imperialism" by London *Times* editor Simon Jenkins. "Three quarters of the globe is now at risk of attack from America or its U.N. proxies," he warned. Commentator William Safire, writing in the *New York Times*, agreed that the intervention defined a "new sovereignty." The "world's responsible pow-

Clan-family regions in Somalia



ers," he intoned, "have a right to intrude" on what formerly was considered "impenetrable sovereignty" in case of "anarchy" and "genocidal tyranny." Similarly, syndicated columnist William Pfaff wrote that only a return to "neo-colonialism" could restore "order and peace" to many former colonies, and that given colonialism's bad name, this neo-colonialism should be carried out in the form of U.N. trusteeships.

According to the *New York Times*, Scowcroft and CIA director Robert Gates have argued for making Somalia into a U.N. protectorate by January.

In propagandizing for this policy, Pfaff claimed that several countries are "incapable of governing themselves," and cited as potential targets Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia, Peru, Burma (Myanmar), Sri Lanka, Liberia, and Mozambique. On Dec. 8, U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali (whose grandfather signed the papers authorizing Britain's rule over Egypt and Sudan), called for an 8,500-man military and civilian force to occupy and rule Mozambique.

The U.N. authorized the "humanitarian" deployment without even recognizing the sovereignty of the (admittedly battered) state of Somalia. There was no attempt at even the pretense of legality by asking Somalia's permission, as required by the U.N. Charter. Commenting on this breakthrough, French Prime Minister Pierre Bérégovoy exulted: "From now on in the history of humanity, there will be a duty of interference when lives are threatened."