
Somalia Engulfed in Conflict

Crisis threatens the entire region, since the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia, backed by Anglo-American neo-cons.

The dramatic escalation of fighting and violence since mid-March in the Somali capital of Mogadishu, is a result of efforts by Ethiopian troops and forces associated with the powerless Transitional Federal Government (TFG) to weaken their Somali opponents, prior to staging their version of reconciliation talks. The anti-Ethiopian forces oppose the Anglo-American neo-con-backed effort to control a country that has not had a government since 1991. Formed outside of Somalia by neighboring countries in 2004, the TFG is seen as a puppet regime by its opponents.

The clashes in Mogadishu have been the most violent of the last 15 years. An Ethiopian base was reportedly surrounded by opposing forces, called “insurgents” in the Western media, and they had to fight their way out, according to the Ugandan daily *New Vision* March 30. Indiscriminate shelling and mortar fire fell on civilian areas of the city, inducing many to flee. The UN reports that 124,000 (more than 10% of the city’s population) have fled since early February. Hundreds, mostly civilians, have reportedly been killed. Corpses were rotting in the streets, and mass graves have been used on two occasions, so far.

The Ethiopian invasion last Christmas season, with material and intelligence assistance from the Bush-Cheney Administration, the active participation of some U.S. troops, attacks by U.S. AC-130 flying gunships, and an unknown number of private U.S. military contractors, has led to a full-scale insurgency in Somalia,

which threatens to spread to the entire Horn of Africa, and beyond. The chaos which dominated Somalia since 1991, with the exception of the last six months of 2006, when a coalition of Islamic forces defeated the warlords and drove them out of Mogadishu, has now been restored. Because of the orchestration of this invasion by the Bush-Cheney crowd, anti-Americanism is rampant in Somalia, according to Ken Menkhaus, an American expert on Somalia. This makes it very easy for intelligence networks to spawn radical jihadist organizations, a critical feature for the neo-cons’ perpetual chaos and war scheme.

This bears out what we reported at the time of the invasion (*EIR*, Jan. 19, 2007): that the intention of Cheney and his neo-con cabal was to instigate permanent warfare throughout the region, in the name of the Global War on Terror. This elaborate invasion of Somalia was obviously not carried out to search for three al-Qaeda members suspected of participating in the bombing of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, which is still the official story.

There is now a growing realization that the conflict could engulf the region. After a truce brokered by Mogadishu’s dominant clan, the Hawiye, failed on April 1, Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit sent letters to the UN, African Union, and Arab League, urging a fast intervention to end the fighting.

Under pressure from African and other governments, the increasingly expendable TFG—Ethiopian Prime

Minister Meles Zenawi reportedly recently invited a group of clan elders from Mogadishu to meet in Addis Ababa, without prior consultation with the TFG—reluctantly agreed to a two-month reconciliation conference in Somalia on April 16, with 3,000 people representing various clans and the diaspora (as many Somalis live outside the impoverished country as in it). The TFG’s foreign minister, Ismail Hurra Buba, said on March 19 that it would not be involved in the talks, and no other organizations would be allowed to attend either: “The conference is intended for all Somalis as individuals to come together.” He said that TFG President Abdulahi Yusuf and Prime Minister Ali Mohammed Gedi would chair the conference, however. With one of the parties in the conflict having the sole authority to dictate who can participate, and who will arbitrate, it will certainly be an exercise in futility.

On April 5, the TFG postponed the reconciliation conference, citing insecurity in Mogadishu, saying it will now be held in mid-May.

There is no chance for any talks without a cease-fire. With Ethiopia playing the “clan card” to divide the Somalis and the warlords, who in the past were known to receive extensive backing from the Bush Administration, the African Union peacekeeping force that the Bush Administration has called for will never be able to achieve a cease-fire. There is now only a 1,400-soldier contingent of Ugandan peacekeeping troops there. U.S. and European envoys are pushing other African countries to increase that to 8,000. But it is delusional to think that such a small force could succeed, when the two previous UN peacekeeping interventions, UNITAF with a force of 37,000, and UNOSOM II with a force of 28,000, did not succeed in two previous interventions in the 1990s.