

French ships, U.S. drones attack Somalia as Kenyan troops invade

U.S.-backed regimes abet imperialist aggression

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An all-out offensive against the Al-Shabaab Islamic resistance movement based in Somalia is currently underway in the southern region of this Horn of Africa nation. A combined force of U.S. Predator drones and French naval vessels is targeting four towns in the southern region so that Kenyan military forces on the ground can seize Kismayo, a port city under the control of Al-Shabaab. The city is a major source of trade and serves as the economic lifeline for the resistance movement, which has been labeled by the U.S. as a terrorist organization allied with al-Qaida.

Kenyan press reports on Oct. 23 indicated that French warships bombarded areas near Kismayo in efforts to support the land invasion and the ongoing Pentagon drone attacks. French diplomatic sources, as usual, denied these reports.

At least 4,000 Kenyan troops are fighting alongside the military forces of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), the interim government based in Mogadishu that has little popular support and is largely subsidized by the U.S. The TFG is bolstered by the so-called African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), which encompasses 9,000 troops from the Washington-backed regimes of Uganda and Burundi.

Naval ships from Kenya fitted with heavy weapons are also said to be operating in Somalian territorial waters.

U.S. drone attacks have escalated against Somalia over the last few weeks. In just two days, Oct. 20 and 21, at least 66 people were reported killed in bombing raids carried out by these pilotless planes deployed by the CIA and the Pentagon.

French naval vessels were reported to have struck the town of Kuday near Kismayo. These attacks may be related to the abductions of several French nationals and a British citizen in Somalia in recent months.

U.S. officials told the Associated Press during the week of Oct. 17 that Washington was pressuring the Kenyan government to take action inside Somalia. Despite this admission, the White House is claiming that the Kenyan invasion took the Obama administration by surprise.

Kenyan military leaders are anticipating heavy fighting in their efforts to take the town of Afmadow. Heavy rains have stalled the Kenyan military advances as hundreds of residents have fled in order to avoid the impending assault.

Kenyan military spokesperson Maj. Emmanuel Chirchir said: “Most likely man-to-man battles will occur in Afmadow. That is one of the areas we want to inflict trauma and damage on the al-Shabaab basically to reduce their effectiveness completely so that they do not exist as a force.” (Associated Press, Oct. 24)

Regional grouping calls for ‘no-fly zone’

In another development, the regional Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has called for the imposition of a so-called “no-fly zone” and naval blockade against Somalia.

An innocuous-sounding “no-fly zone” resolution against Libya, passed last March by the U.N. Security Council, became the basis for a seven-month NATO bombing campaign that destroyed the infrastructure of the country, killed thousands of civilians, displaced hundreds of thousands of workers and led to the targeted assassinations of Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi, several members of his family and other top government officials in that oil-rich North African state.

The prevailing atmosphere within the governments of the U.S. and other imperialist countries is heavily geared toward military intervention in Africa. However, the most recent effort of these countries to get a sanctions resolution against Syria failed as China and Russia, citing what had happened to Libya, both exercised their veto.

The invasion of Somalia is closely related to the pro-Western policy imperatives of the IGAD/East Africa Community Political Initiative. Leading states within the IGAD/EAC Political Initiative include Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi and Rwanda. Their current governments have close political, economic and military ties to the U.S.

The ongoing Kenyan invasion of Somalia is illegal, says a Horn of Africa publication: “The Kenyan action contravenes the U.N. and African Union Charters and infringes the sovereignty of Somalia.” (Mareeg Online, Oct. 24)

This article refers to both the Kampala Accord, which was signed on June 9 and mandates the postponement of elections in Somalia for one year while the involvement of pro-Western interests in the country’s political process is ongoing, and the Communique of the International Contact Group, signed in Denmark on Sept. 29. Both documents make reference to a Regional Political Initiative which is not explained in detail.

Mareeg Online states that the current situation in Somalia provides a political framework which “serves the leaders of IGAD/EAC as an insurance coverage for their political abuses and corruption in their own countries and as a cash cow to receive special privileges and massive financial, military and diplomatic assistance from the U.S. administration and European countries. The clashes between Somali factions along the border with Kenya and the recent spate of kidnapping of foreign citizens from inside Kenya have disturbed the security and economic situation of Kenya, but they were not sufficient to justify a military invasion of Somalia.”

The Kenyan government, in preparation for the invasion, received helicopter gunships from the U.S. In addition, former Somalian TFG Minister of Defense Mohamed Gandi “reached a personal understanding with Kenyan officials for the recruiting, training and arming of 2,000 troops selected from specific clans of the Jubba regions and asked for their relocation in the

capital of Mogadishu.” (Mareeg Online)

The Horn of Africa nations and the entire East Africa region have strategic interests for the U.S. and the European capitalist states. The Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean contain some of the most lucrative shipping lanes in the world, with billions of dollars of goods traveling through this region daily.

Oil has recently been discovered in Uganda. Kenya is a major area for the Western-oriented tourist industry. Somalia, which has been without a stable government for more than two decades, has posed a monumental challenge for U.S. imperialism, which has tried unsuccessfully to impose a stable government subordinate to its interests since 1992.

The Al-Shabaab resistance movement has taken control of large sections of the south and central regions of Somalia. Inside the capital of Mogadishu, the organization controls most of the city. Were it not for the presence of a CIA station, Predator drone missions and the U.S.-funded AMISOM forces, the Islamic group would have seized power long ago.

These developments in Somalia are taking place within the context of greater U.S. and NATO military intervention in Africa. In addition to their Libya mission, where the U.S. Africom military command conducted its first major operation on the continent, the U.S. imperialists have recently admitted to dispatching 100 military advisers and Special Forces commandos into four states in Central and East Africa.

Other reports indicate that the oil-producing state of Nigeria has stepped up its military cooperation with the U.S. and that the Gulf of Guinea is the scene of periodic war games conducted by the Pentagon in partnership with several governments in West Africa.

These military operations on the part of the imperialist countries are framed to the public as “humanitarian missions” designed to fight terrorism and protect civilians. Yet it is the U.S. involvement in Somalia that has destabilized the region and created the worst food and water crisis in the world.

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