

Somalia Facing Famine Despite U.S. Role and Oil Wealth

Failure to reach political settlement hinders development and relief

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Early in September United States President Barack Obama announced that he had carried out a targeted assassination killing the leader of the Al-Shabaab Islamic resistance organization in Somalia which has been fighting against the Federal Government and a regional military force for over six years.

In a matter of days Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for retaliatory attacks against two convoys of African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) troops operating alongside high-ranking U.S. military intelligence personnel and representatives of a consultancy firm which advises the government in Mogadishu on counterinsurgency methods against Al-Shabaab. These attacks resulted in the deaths of at least twelve people including four from the U.S.

The attacks against AMISOM and the U.S. military personnel did not gain wide press coverage in the western corporate media. The Wall Street Journal carried a story indicating the strategic nature of the imperialist interventions in Somalia where oil and other interests are being exploited.

Amid the existence of the AMISOM forces numbering 22,000, which are funded, trained and coordinated by the Pentagon, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the European Union forces (EUFOR), another famine is looming inside this nation. Leading humanitarian agencies concerned with food security have reported over the last several months that millions of people in Somalia are threatened with starvation.

Other than providing additional weaponry, military training and diplomatic support for the fractured federal government in Mogadishu, the U.S. State Department has no plans aimed at reaching any degree of a political settlement inside the country. AMISOM troops have been operating in Somalia since 2007 and today soldiers are deployed from Uganda, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and other states.

Tensions and disputes have developed surrounding the large-scale western-funded occupation of Somalia by the AMISOM forces. In the southern region of the country, forces outside of Al-Shabaab have complained about the dominance of Kenya through its Defense Forces in the internal politics in the area.

Allegations of abuse of women by AMISOM troops have been reported. Although the so-called peacekeeping operation is endorsed by the United Nations, the key players in the occupation are Washington and its NATO allies.

Food Insecurity Reflects Failed U.S. Foreign Policy in East Africa

While providing introductory remarks for the Somalia Food Security Results survey, Philippe Lazarrini, the United Nations humanitarian director for Somalia, stressed that “It is terrible to think that with almost 2.9 million people in need in Somalia, the aid appeal is only 30 per cent funded with \$658 million still needed to end 2014.” (NTV Uganda, Sept. 11)

The Somali country director for the World Food Program noted that food shortages in the country are expected to become more critical during the next few months principally due to insufficient rains, the burgeoning conflict between the government, AMISOM and Al-Shabaab prompting the rise in food prices. “We have scaled up to meet growing needs, but funding shortages meant the organization risked running short of vital supplies by September, leaving us with no alternative than to reduce food assistance to most vulnerable — IDPs and malnourished children,” Mr Bukera said. (NTV Uganda, Sept. 11)

In fact this problem is not confined to Somalia but is regional throughout the Horn of Africa which encompasses Ethiopia, Djibouti, Eritrea, and sections of Sudan. Throughout the region of the entire East Africa, there is a strong U.S. military presence and several allied regimes which play an integral role in carrying out Washington’s foreign policy imperatives.

On Sept. 15 the regional dimensions of the crisis was highlighted during a joint press conference between representatives of the UN and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), an East African organization. Fighting has escalated in southern Somalia, South Sudan and unrest has taken place in Kenya as well since 2013.

In the combined statement delivered in Nairobi, UN Assistant Secretary- General for Humanitarian Affairs Kyung-Wha Kang, and Mahboub Maalim, Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), stressed the need for urgent funding to assist 14 million people facing food insecurity in the region. “Displacement in Horn of Africa stands at an estimated 6.8 million people and 14 million people are food insecure, yet funding has remained at half of the appeal,” Kang said. (Xinhua, Sept. 15)

Somalia Oil and Other Resources Exploited by the West

All of the affected states throughout the Horn of Africa and the entire East Africa region contain oil, natural gas and other strategic resources. Without persistent conflict largely engineered by the U.S. and other imperialist states, the people in these territories would have adequate food and other resources to raise their standard of living.

With specific reference to Somalia, the exploration and drilling of oil is well underway in the breakaway region of Puntland in the North with one of the leading firms being Africa Oil Corp. based in Canada. Prospecting for oil is also taking place in another breakaway region of Somaliland.

Despite these economic projects, the peace and security of Somalia remains elusive. In Somaliland, the government has accused a Norway petroleum firm of deliberately destabilizing the country.

The Somaliland Petroleum ministry said that oil firms are signing multiple contracts and negotiating agreements with regional governments which are only “adding fire to conflicts.

These small companies are destabilizing the country and destroying the international

community's effort to build the peace and the security of the country," the ministry added.

This same ministry singled out Norway's DNO, charging the company with "planning to introduce armed militiamen in areas already in conflict and thereby stoking old feuds which resulted in internal displacement and harming the innocent and the most vulnerable people". (Reuters, Sept. 3)

"We are warning those companies that the Somali government will lodge complaints with their respective countries and the United Nations Security Council," the ministry added. Leading petroleum firms have claimed interests in Somalia oil resources even prior to the 1991-92 initial interventions by the UN and the U.S.

Somalian governmental officials in August met with representatives of ExxonMobil, ConocoPhillips, Chevron, and BP for the first time since 1991. The federal government said it wanted these firms to propose a scheduled return to Somalia.

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