

US, NATO Allies Prepare New Invasion Of Somalia

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The 15th biennial African Union summit in Kampala, Uganda ended on July 27 with mixed results regarding support for U.S. and Western European plans to escalate foreign military intervention in nearby Somalia.

The 35 heads of state present at the three-day meeting were reported to have authorized the deployment of 2,000 more African troops to back up the beleaguered Western-backed Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in Mogadishu and to bring the full complement of forces doing so to 8,000, but the new contingent will probably consist solely of troops from Uganda and Burundi, which supply the approximately 6,000 already serving with the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Reports of another 2,000 reinforcements from Djibouti and Guinea are problematic and their deployment remains to be seen, not that pressure will not be exerted on those two nations and others from outside the continent.

AMISOM is the successor to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Peace Support Mission in Somalia (IGASOM) set up in 2005 by the six-member group which includes Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda and which also was to have provided 8,000 troops for deployment to Somalia. The 53 members of the African Union except for Uganda and Burundi have been loath to commit military units to intervene in fighting in Somalia, whether against the Islamic Courts Union five years ago or against al-Shabaab insurgents currently.

In late 2006 U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice met with Ugandan Foreign Minister Sam Kutesa to plan the earlier IGASOM operation and in January of 2007 Uganda pledged its first troops which, along with those included in a reported offer by Nigeria, were to total 8,000.

Three and a half years later, there are only 6,000 foreign troops in Somalia (now under AMISOM, the only difference being the acronym now employed) and all of those from Uganda and Burundi, both nations U.S. military clients and surrogates.

The African Union (AU) initially approved AMISOM on January 19, 2007 and granted it a six-month mandate. In July of 2010 the real prime movers behind the mission, the U.S. and its NATO allies in the European Union, are pushing for an escalation of armed intervention in Somalia with more Western-trained Ugandan troops conducting open combat operations: Changing the mandate from, to use the terms employed to mask military aggression, peacekeeping to peace enforcement.

The first attempt by the U.S. and its non-African allies to enforce a compliant government in the Horn of Africa nation, Ethiopia's invasion in December of 2006, was assisted by the Pentagon's Joint Special Operations Command (headed up by now retired General Stanley

McChrystal until early in 2006), which conducted military operations inside Somalia no later than the beginning of the next year. At the time Ethiopia was the second largest recipient of U.S. military aid in Africa (another of the three countries bordering Somalia, Djibouti, being the first) and American military personnel were stationed in the country. Logistical and other assistance was provided by the Pentagon for the operation.

On the sidelines of the recently concluded African Union summit U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Johnnie Carson “gathered the presidents of Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, Djibouti and Uganda, along with the prime minister of Ethiopia for a closed-door session” to push for more aggressive military operations in Somalia. The State Department official was quoted as saying, “We came away even more united and committed to work together strengthen the TFG, to help strengthen AMISOM, to help strengthen the forces for stability in Somalia and to help do as much as we can to help beat al-Shabab. Al-Shabab represents a foreign and a negative influence that cannot only be destructive inside Somalia, but across the entire region.” [1]

Note the opprobrium attached to the word foreign. With what Carson called “a wake-up call not only for the region but for Africa as a whole” [2] sounded by deadly bombings in the Ugandan capital on July 11, more foreign troops armed, trained, and airlifted by great powers in North America and Europe are destined for deployment to Somalia.

Officials from the European Union and from Britain and France – the two main historical colonial masters on the African continent – were present at the meeting with Carson and America’s East African proxies. [3] A Voice of America report on the closed-door meeting reminded readers that “The European Union, the United Nations and the United States are the main financial contributors to the African Union’s AMISOM peacekeeping force in Somalia.” [4]

The arm-twisting produced few results. Despite claims by the chairman of the African Union Commission, Gabon’s Jean Ping, that troops from Djibouti and Guinea (Conakry) would join AMISOM/IGAD forces from Uganda and Burundi, the additional troops will almost surely come entirely from the last two nations. Also, the nearly three dozen heads of state at the AU summit rejected the Ugandan (and Western) demand for a “peace enforcement” rules of engagement mandate.

The current chairman of the AU, president of Malawi Bingu wa Mutharika, told reporters, “There have been calls for a change in the mandate to a more robust approach to the insurgent attacks in Somalia by Uganda and Burundi, to go beyond Mogadishu, (which is) their current limit, but (we) did not decide on that.”

Ping, however, indicated that the U.S. and NATO allies have not abandoned plans for intensified military operations in Somalia, stating, “We need equipment to match with the change in combat approach. We need helicopters for that. The United States and the U.K. are considering our request....” [5] He also mentioned that France could provide additional helicopters.

Even the Attorney General of the U.S., Eric Holder, attended the AU summit as the Obama administration’s representative and saw fit to impose his opinions on the 53-nation organization. Before the summit began he met with several of the continent’s heads of state and in prepared remarks to the summit affirmed that “The United States...recognizes that ending the threat of al-Shabaab to the world will take more than just law enforcement. That

is why we are working closely with the AU to support the African Union's Mission in Somalia. The United States applauds the heroic contributions that are being made on a daily basis by Ugandan and Burundian troops, and we pledge to maintain our support for the AU and the AU Mission in Somalia." [6]

Lightly-armed al-Shabaab militants have now been elevated by Washington to the status of a threat to the world, though Holder's colleague Carson limited his hyperbole to branding them a "negative influence...across the entire region." The dual bombings in Kampala, incidentally, have been attributed to the group as a warning sign to Uganda to remove (and certainly not to increase) its troops in Somalia, but in fact appear like a provocation designed to accomplish the opposite result.

Four days before the AU summit commenced, the defense chiefs of the six Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) nations - Uganda, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Sudan - met to discuss boosting troop deployments to Somalia.

Weeks before IGAD had recommended that not the earlier cited figure of 8,000 but fully 20,000 foreign troops could be deployed to Somalia in yet another attempt to salvage the Transitional Federal Government, which doesn't even control much of the country's capital despite 6,000 Ugandan and Burundian troops serving as its army. 20,000 foreign troops entering Somalia in the face of overwhelming popular opposition is not a peacekeeping mission. It is an invasion.

In mid-July Ugandan officials announced that their nation's neighbors in IGAD and in the Eastern Africa Standby Brigade (EASBRIG) - Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Seychelles, Somalia and Uganda - had given "soft support" should Uganda "go on the offensive in Somalia."

"Ugandan officials now confirm that Kampala is pursuing a two-track strategy that could see it follow Al Shabaab into Somalia with or without UN Security Council consent." A news report disclosed that the Yoweri Museveni administration is prepared to mobilize the entirety of the 20,000 troops needed for a full-scale invasion of Somalia and "military sources say Uganda feels it has the capacity to go it alone in Somalia and has been building up its military strength for such an eventuality." [7]

The nation's air force has acquired "additions to its arsenal in recent weeks" from its Western patrons "in what observers see as a concerted push to increase Uganda's military capability."

Last week a Defence Ministry spokesman stated, "We are one of the most efficient armies in Africa. We can defend our country from anywhere, even within Somalia." The spokesman, Lieutenant-Colonel Felix

Kulaigye, added, "Anybody who brings war to us, we take back that war to them. We shall pursue Al Shabaab from Somalia in line with the wishes of the Transitional Federal Government." [8]

During the last invasion and occupation of Somalia, that of Ethiopia from December of 2006 to January of 2009, fighting between a similar invading force of 20,000 troops and Somali militias resulted in the deaths of over 16,000 civilians and the displacement of hundreds of thousands in the capital in 2007 alone according to the Mogadishu-based Elman Peace and Human Rights Organisation.

The AMISOM mandate (approved by the AU but, as seen above, with no backing by member states except for Uganda and Burundi) excludes the deployment of troops from nations bordering Somalia - Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya. Ugandan military forces and equipment have to cross Kenya to reach the country; that is, to be airlifted by United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization into parts of the Somali capital not under the control of rebels.

The Ugandan government, largely rebuffed at the AU summit, is pushing for the maiden deployment of the 10-nation Eastern Africa Standby Brigade (Eastern African Standby Brigade Coordination Mechanism) to Somalia, which would appreciably broaden the scope of the conflict. In addition, it is planning to use forums like the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) - whose members are Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia - "which already has provisions that offer some room for intervention."

"Somalia has already applied to be a member; once that request is approved, Uganda will be able to work together with the Transitional Federal Government and fight Al Shabaab under the legal framework that governs the organisation." [9]

On July 20 the head of AFRICOM, General William Ward, addressed the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C. and pledged that the U.S. will "provide more training, transportation, and logistical aid to the AU mission, known as AMISOM." Also, "In a briefing to reporters last week, a senior Obama administration official said the U.S. wants to 'build up the capabilities' of AMISOM and the [Somali transitional] government." [10]

In late April Brigadier General Silver Kayemba, in charge of training and operations for the Ugandan People's Defense Force (UPDF), was in the U.S. and visited the headquarters of U.S. Army Africa, the Pentagon, the National Defense University and a Marine Corps base. Kayemba, who was also trained in the U.S., said, "This visit strengthens our relationship with the U.S. Armed Forces, particularly with U.S. Army Africa. We are looking forward to even closer cooperation in the future." [11]

Last month officers of the U.S. 17th Air Force, the air component of AFRICOM (Air Forces Africa) headquartered at the Ramstein Air Base in Germany, traveled to Uganda for what was described as "a senior leader engagement event....to discuss current and future engagement activities between Ugandan People's Defence Force, Ugandan People's Defence Air Force and Air Forces Africa."

The head of the U.S. delegation, Brigadier General Michael Callan, toured the airfield and logistics hangars at the Entebbe Air Force Base and "met with a representative of the U.S. State Department-contracted Dyncorp...which supports the UPDF [Ugandan People's Defence Force] with aerial resupply and troop movements of Ugandan, Burundian, and Somali forces in and out of Mogadishu...." DynCorp International is a private military company that receives almost all of its \$2 billion in annual contracts from the U.S. federal government.

General Callan stated, "Uganda is one of only two countries supporting the UN's AMISOM mission currently. Though the airlift is contracted, it is good to have the understanding of those ground-based missions and capabilities of the UPDF as we pursue future air force and joint initiatives."

The Defense and Army Attaché at the American embassy in Kampala added, “We’ve been working with their army forces for some time, providing great training opportunities through the Department of State-funded International Military Education and Training, or IMET program and multi-national peacekeeping operations. Now they would like for us to do that with their air forces.” [12]

Both U.S. military officials stressed the Pentagon’s role in upgrading Uganda’s air force for future operations. “17th Air Force brings focus to those much needed air force activities,” as military attaché Army Lieutenant General Gregory Joachim stated. [13]

In developing bilateral and regional collective military partnerships with most every nation in Africa through AFRICOM, the U.S. works closely with its allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. This March “Senior figures from the US military’s Africa Command were in Brussels...looking to build cooperation with the European Union to boost training and reform for African security forces....” [14]

The Pentagon has between 2,500-3,000 troops from all four major branches of the military assigned to the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa stationed in Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti, Somalia’s neighbor to the north. France has its largest overseas military base and 3,000 troops in the same small nation. Several hundred troops from Britain, Germany, the Netherlands and Spain have also been deployed there under NATO auspices since the beginning of the decade. The U.S. has used its airfield in Djibouti for attacks in Somalia and Yemen.

Last year the Pentagon secured its second major installation in the area, in the Indian Ocean nation of Seychelles, where it has deployed over 130 troops, Reaper unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) and three P-3 Orion anti-submarine and maritime surveillance aircraft.

In addition to the U.S.-led multinational Combined Task Force 150 and Combined Task Force 151 naval deployments off the shores of Somalia (with logistical facilities in Djibouti), NATO and the European Union are running complementary naval operations, Operation Ocean Shield and European Union Naval Force (EU NAVFOR) Somalia – Operation Atalanta, respectively. This March NATO announced it was extending its deployment for another – unprecedented – three years, until the end of 2012. Last month the Netherlands “agreed to a NATO request to deploy a submarine off the coast of Somalia....” [15]

In June the EU followed NATO’s lead when its foreign ministers agreed to prolong Operation Atalanta until December of 2012. An EU press release at the time revealed the broader Western strategy in the Horn of Africa region, one by no means limited to “combating piracy”: “The root causes of piracy in East Africa lie on land. To address them, the current naval operation is combined with the EU training mission for Somalia (EUTM), which contributes to the strengthening of the Somali security forces.” [16]

In fact the EU is training Somali soldiers in Uganda for war in their homeland and NATO is transporting Ugandan and Burundian troops for the same purpose.

A NATO website feature disclosed in March that “the USA has conducted airlift missions under the NATO banner in support of...Ugandan troop rotations. The airlift, which commenced on 5 Mar 2010 and was completed on 16 Mar 2010, was undertaken by USA contracted DynCorp International, transporting 1700 Ugandan troops from Uganda into Mogadishu and re-deploying 850 Ugandan troops out of Mogadishu.

“Part of this policy is the NATO standing agreement to provide strategic sealift and airlift support for African Union Troop Contributing Countries willing to deploy to Somalia, recently extended by NATO until 31 January 2011.” [17]

With the deployment of the NATO Response Force Maritime Groups 1 and 2 off the coast of Somalia, first with Operation Allied Provider and since last August with Operation Ocean Shield, the Western military bloc has extended its nearly nine-year-old Operation Active Endeavor naval surveillance and interdiction mission throughout the entire Mediterranean Sea into the Gulf of Aden to the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf.

The current commander of Ocean Shield, Dutch Commodore Michiel Hijmans, held a meeting on board the NATO mission’s flagship on July 12 with leaders of Somalia’s semi-independent Puntland region, which has become a land-based component of NATO operations in the Horn of Africa. According to the bloc, “The purpose of the talks was to build on the existing and growing relationship that has developed between NATO and the Puntland authorities.” [18]

Several days later the NATO flotilla docked in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates where Commodore Hijmans broached the subject of “chasing Somali pirates” into the Red Sea, an area not yet covered by the Ocean Shield mandate. NATO warships in the Red Sea would place them off the coasts of Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Djibouti, Jordan and Israel and connect NATO naval operations through the Suez Canal to Active Endeavor in the Mediterranean.

Early this month the French military attaché to Somalia said that the “government of the Republic of France has asked Uganda and other African nations to send more troops to war torn Somalia,” and urged “more African states to send troops to Somalia....” [19] France will be instrumental in pressuring Djibouti and Guinea to send troops to Somalia, as both countries are former French colonies and Djibouti is a member of the French Community.

France is among several EU states that have sent troops to Uganda to train 2,000 Somali soldiers for fighting at home. The others are Spain (which is in charge), Britain, Germany, Italy, Greece, Hungary, Belgium, Portugal, Luxembourg, Sweden, Finland, Ireland, Malta and Cyprus. A NATO operation in all but name. German troops deployed in May are to “remain in East Africa for a year.” [20]

According to the Christian Science Monitor, “Money for logistical support is coming from the United States, which has reportedly already pumped millions of dollars into similar smaller training programs run by local militaries in Uganda and Djibouti over the past 18 months.

“The EU program to train an army to fight for Somalia’s beleaguered transitional government involves 150 instructors from 14 EU countries at a cost of \$6 million.”

The featured cited above also provided the following background information:

“Since 2004, the US has poured huge resources into initiatives such as Easbrig [Eastern Africa Standby Brigade], using private contractors and military advisers to train almost 60,000 African soldiers such as...Rwandans....Africom has also trained Congolese special forces to operate in the country’s mineral-rich forests and reformed virtually the entire Liberian national army. Easbrig is an example of what Secretary of State Hillary Clinton calls ‘smart power’ – a mixture of military might and nation-building that bears a resemblance to

Rumsfeld's concept of the 'long war'...Several critics have likened Africom to a Trojan horse, using the cover of humanitarian aid to pursue America's real strategic interests." [21]

EASBRIG is expected to grow to several thousand troops from as many as 14 nations.

One of the main missions of AFRICOM is create, train and deploy regional military forces to further U.S. and general Western objectives in Africa, the world's second most populous continent. Somalia is the first test case.

Notes

- 1) Voice of America News, July 26, 2010
- 2) CNN, July 27, 2010
- 3) Voice of America News, July 26, 2010
- 4) Ibid
- 5) CNN, July 27, 2010
- 6) United States Department of Justice, July 25, 2010
- 7) The East African, July 19, 2010
- 8) Ibid
- 9) Ibid
- 10) Voice of America News, July 20, 2010
- 11) United States Africa Command, April 30, 2010
- 12) U.S. Air Forces in Europe, June 2, 2010
- 13) Ibid
- 14) Europolitics, March 5, 2010
- 15) BBC News, June 22, 2010
- 16) Defense News, June 15, 2010
- 17) North Atlantic Treaty Organization
Allied Command Operations
March 18, 2010
- 18) North Atlantic Treaty Organization
Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe
July 13, 2010
- 19) Uganda Government News, July 9, 2010
- 20) Associated Press, March 31, 2010
- 21) Christian Science Monitor, June 18, 2010

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