

U.S. Military Strike In Somalia Is Part of Bush-Cheney 'Surge'

by Lawrence K. Freeman

In good political intelligence work, one should never get so focussed on the facts on the ground, that one fails to see the actual cause motivating the observed events. This is certainly true of the U.S.-supported Ethiopian invasion into Somalia. After the U.S. used an AC-130 gunship attack on Jan. 8 in southern Somalia, which mowed down dozens of civilians according to numerous accounts, I kept asking myself this question: If the U.S. were truly serious about hunting down three alleged al-Qaeda operatives, why would they use the equivalent of a flying tank to indiscriminately fire on a large group of Somalians?

The answer does not lie within the bounds of the conflict in Somalia. In a response to questions from Congressional offices during his Jan. 11 webcast, U.S. statesman Lyndon LaRouche said: "The recent bombings in Somalia are a reflection of the extension of Vice President Cheney's intention behind the surge in Iraq, and Cheney's intention to have a war against Iran. This is a long-term process, and it's all evil."

At a recent Washington, D.C. conference on "Somalia's Future," Theresa Whelan, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs, told the gathering of several hundred, that there was just *one* military strike by the U.S. in Somalia, that killed only eight Somalians, who were connected to a terrorist al-Qaeda cell. However, Jendayi Frazer, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, who spoke later, revealed to the audience that the American attack was in response to the perception that the U.S. military was too overstretched in other conflicts to carry out another military adventure, and was part of the "surge of forces into the Gulf."

This confirms LaRouche's analysis, that to understand the Somali conflict in the Horn of Africa, one has to understand the larger geopolitical British strategy to destabilize Muslim nations along the "Arc of Crisis" from Pakistan to Turkey, south through Southwest Asia, across into the Horn of Africa.

According to the *Australian* newspaper, which cited the *Sunday Times* and Reuters, a British SAS team joined U.S. Special Forces inside Somalia to hunt down al-Qaeda suspects, after having prepared Ethiopian troops for months in advance, for the December invasion. The newspaper also reported that the U.S. helped finance the operation and provided satellite surveillance as well. Claims by U.S. military and

intelligence agencies, that al-Qaeda controlled the Council of Islamic Courts (CIC) inside Somalia, provided the pretext to enter Somalia under the cover of fighting the global war on terrorism. In the Spring of 2006, the U.S. failed to get a foothold in Somalia, when the warlords it was backing were defeated by the CIC, which then gained control over the southern part of the country. This is the first visible U.S. military presence in Somalia since U.S. forces were driven out 12 years ago, in what became known as "Blackhawk Down."

How Will Somalia Recover?

The most accurate and honest assessment of the Somalia crisis presented at this conference was by given by a representative of Doctors Without Borders, who said that the situation in Somalia was a disaster today as it has been for the last 16 years. Other American and Somali speakers repeated what has become the catch phrase—that Somalia is now at a moment of "opportunity," as a result of the success of Ethiopian military in defeating and driving out the CIC. This is followed by a caution: The window of opportunity is narrow and will close very quickly, if the Transitional Federal Government (TGF) does not bring stability immediately.

However, most observers realize that the TGF has insufficient support inside Somalia, and is presently too weak to rule the country were the Ethiopian military machine to pull out. Ethiopia is faced immediately with making difficult decisions that will affect its security, with over 50% of its people belonging to the Muslim faith, and noticeable opposition to its invasion of Somalia, a Muslim nation. If it leaves too soon, Ethiopia could collapse the TGF, but staying will drain Ethiopia's overstretched treasury, and subject it to blowback both at home and in Somalia.

Aside from verbal encouragement and military backing, the U.S. is offering little to address the real underlying problem of the conflict—the multi-ton elephant in the room, that everyone wishes to ignore—which is the lack of even basic infrastructure, and the overwhelming poverty that afflicts the entire region. The U.S. has promised a mere \$40 million for Somalia, and of that, a paltry \$10 million is earmarked for some type of development.

The immediate issue of concern is, when Ethiopian troops pull out, will there be an orderly "hand-off" to peacekeeping troops? More to the point, will there be any peacekeeping troops? The target of 8,000 troops was ridiculed as far too few to be effective, and having even such a small force in place by sometime in February, as put forth by Assistant Secretary Frazer, seems quite remote. No African country has stepped forward with a commitment to send troops, except Uganda, which is considering sending about 1,000 troops for such a peacekeeping mission. Most countries, including Uganda, are quite nervous about the exit strategy of such a deployment, given that little is being done to actually stabilize Somalia, notwithstanding the usual bromides of mobilizing international support and encouraging dialogue.