

Pentagon Drone Attacks Escalate in Somalia While AMISOM Plans Withdrawal

by *Abayomi Azikiwe*, originally published on [Pan African News Wire](#), Jan 31, 2018

Trump administration creates conditions for further displacement and hunger

Somalia is facing yet another major crisis as the United States steps up its drone attack and combat operations in this Horn of Africa state.

Drone attacks are promoted by the Defense Department and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) as an effective means of targeting so-called "terrorists" without threatening the lives of innocent people and American soldiers. This of course is not always the situation on the ground.

The impact of drones on civilian populations has proven to be devastating. In most cases those killed, injured and dislocated are not the targeted individuals or groups. Civilians including women, children and the elderly tend to be the primary victims.

Nonetheless, news reports related to the worsening security situation around Mogadishu asserts that the aerial drone strikes are taking a toll on Al-Shabaab, the Islamist organization which is said to be the major impediment to the stabilization of the country. Al-Shabaab grew out of the interference of Washington in the internal affairs of Somalia after elements within the Union of Islamic Courts were recruited into the transitional federal regime nine years ago.

An alliance of contiguous and regional states under the rubric

of the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) was deployed to Somalia eleven years ago. At its height, AMISOM had 22,000 troops in Somalia along with several thousand para-military police units all backed, trained, funded and coordinated by the U.S., the European Union (EU) and their allies.

AMISOM has repeatedly said that Al-Shabaab is no longer a serious security threat in the capital of Mogadishu. However, periodic attacks are still occurring attributed to Al-Shabaab. A twin bomb attack during late 2017 was the most deadly since the deployment of AMISOM resulting in over 500 deaths, although it remains unclear whether Al-Shabaab was behind the operation.

Emphasis in recent weeks has been placed on praising the purported effectiveness of the drone bombings particularly coming from the AU special envoy to the country. Yet other issues which are surfacing are not being addressed along with the prospects of a withdrawal of AMISOM forces from the theater of battle.

AU representative Francisco Madeira said of the present situation that: "These drone attacks, in particular, are wiping out the Al-Shabaab in large numbers. And it is a good thing to put an end to terrorism in this way."

Well the problems of "terrorism" in Somalia and throughout other geo-political regions such as Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen and Niger, has not been resolved to the satisfaction of imperialism through drone strikes. The spreading of destruction and displacement does not represent any long term solution for the Pentagon and NATO-allied forces or the majority of the people who live in these areas.

Fostering this dangerous illusion, Madeira went on to say: "The establishment of a comprehensive and effective Somali national army could take longer than expected." In making such a statement it implies that the U.S. policy of escalating the

bombing is the only viable response to the current political and security impasse.

In fact the western media has frequently lost track of the historical trajectory of events in Somalia over the last twelve years. It was in 2006 that the Union of Islamic Courts which was developing some semblance of stability in Somalia came under attack by U.S. proxies leading to the military intervention of Ethiopia and the eventual concoction and deployment of AMISOM.

Such a false scenario was published by the French Press Agency (AFP) on January 27 when the agency said:

“Deployed in 2007 to support the very fragile central Somali government, the AMISOM is expected to leave the country by the end of 2020, after transferring all its security prerogatives to the Somali army. But Francisco Madeira did not rule out an extension of the mission’s mandate.”

The question is what “fragile central government” was in existence in 2007? There had not been the pretense of an effective state authority in Somalia since 1991 when the government of former military leader and President Mohamed Siad Barre collapsed amid internecine conflict sweeping the entire country.

Displacement Fostered by U.S.-backed Government in Mogadishu

Another report published by the Guardian newspaper based in London portrays a more realistic picture of the actual developments in Somalia. The drone attacks, the utilization of Special Forces from the Pentagon and the constant misrepresentation of events inside the country are causing great harm to the Somalian people.

According to the publication: “

Dozens of civilians have been killed and wounded in Somalia as U.S.-led airstrikes against Islamist militants increase to unprecedented levels, a Guardian investigation has found, raising fears that Washington's actions could bolster support for extremists. The escalation in strikes is part of the Trump administration's broader foreign policy strategy in Africa and the Middle East. There have been 34 U.S. airstrikes in Somalia in the last six months – at least twice the total for the whole of 2016. Regional allies active in the campaign against Islamic extremists in the east African country have conducted many missions too. These appear to be the most lethal for civilians.”(Jan. 23 article by Jason Burke)

The impact of the increased militarization by the administration of President Donald Trump is being compounded by the forced removals of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps in the capital. Some 34,000 people have been cleared out of an IDP settlement in Mogadishu after the shelter was ordered torn down by the Washington-backed Somalia National Army (SNA).

Over a three week period from late December 2017 through mid-January 2018, some 3,000 shelters were destroyed. Such actions take on an added dimension of exacerbating the already dire humanitarian situation in Somalia. The U.S.-backed war has crippled the capacity of the people to address the horrendous food deficits caused in part by drought. The near-famine conditions will not be adequately resolved without the realization of peace. Enhanced militarization portends much for the future of the Somalian people who have endured four decades of war and occupation dating back to the late 1970s.

The Guardian notes in their report:

“The sudden increase in the use of air power in Somalia by the U.S. comes after the relaxation of guidelines intended to

prevent civilian casualties and a decision by the Trump administration to give local military commanders greater authority in ordering attacks... A Kenyan military spokesperson referred the Guardian to AMISOM when asked about Kenya's operations in Somalia. Francisco Madeira, the head of AMISOM, said the force had 'not been responsible for any airstrikes' in ... Somalia in 2017. A U.S. military spokesperson said its forces complied 'with the law of armed conflict' and took 'all feasible precautions ... to minimize civilian casualties and other collateral damage'."

Another Large-scale Occupation May Be an Option

Perhaps the Trump administration is setting the stage for another failed large-scale military occupation which proved disastrous during 1992-1994. If the AMISOM project is being exhausted, the only other option is a U.S.-led intervention of greater magnitude.

There has been the reported death of a U.S. combatant last year in a mission which the administration says is strictly advisory. With Somalia being an oil-rich nation located in the strategic area close to vast energy resources throughout the East African coast and West Asia, the imperialists are not prepared to withdraw under a situation absent of a complete military defeat.

At any rate, the quagmire in Somalia cannot be settled without a regional political solution to the war between Al-Shabaab and the western-backed federal government in Mogadishu. The AU should focus its attention on a lasting solution rather than relying on the Trump administration which is only continuing the imperialist military options initiated by President George W. Bush, Jr. in 2006-2007 and its escalation under Barack Obama during his two terms from 2009-2016.

Abayomi Azikiwe is Editor of [Pan African News Wire](#).

Does America Spend Enough on Defense?

In response to the Buffalo News' interesting August 2 feature "Does America Spend Enough on Defense?": We don't need *more* military spending – we need *less*. Our military aggression makes us a target.

John Quigley rightly points out that we should be building bridges at home, rather than bombing bridges abroad and maintaining about 1,000 military bases worldwide. He observes that the average annual defense budget has risen, not fallen, since George W. Bush left office.

In opposition, James Jay Carafano claims that cuts to military spending will leave the US weaker than before 9/11: without continual increases in military spending, others will think we're weak and attack us. However, Al-Qaida's 9/11 attack was not caused by perceived weakness.

The USA spends \$15 Billion more on its military than the next nine countries put together, per the International Institute for Strategic Studies, or more than 34% of the military spending for the entire world, per the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2015.

What have we got to show for such spending?

- A drone program that kills 28 people for each one targeted, which person may be reported killed up to seven times (per *Relieve's* 2014 study "You Never Die

Twice") – prompting the question: who was actually killed?

- Ever-multiplying numbers of potential “terrorists,” persons violently disposed toward U.S. citizens for the U.S.’ terrorizing of whole communities (by soldiers’ night raids on suspect family homes, and frequent drone surveillance with intermittent deadly attacks).
- Culpability for war crimes. Attacks are made without regard for humanitarian principles of international law governing armed conflicts (e.g., necessity and proportionality; protection for civilians, especially women and children; and prohibition against collective punishment).

The USA is also the major seller of arms worldwide, representing more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of all arms exports in 2011, per the NY Times. We sometimes arm both sides of a conflict, and not surprisingly are often attacked with weapons we provided, lately by Isis and Al-Qaida. (We are also #1 in guns per capita, with [per the UN Office of Drugs and Crime] an unbelievable 88.8 guns per 100 residents in 2012 – *excluding* arms held by the government!)

We are the only country that has used nuclear bombs (despite Japan’s imminent surrender), and we maintain our nuclear arsenal at great financial and environmental cost rather than pursuing nuclear disarmament. The treaty with Iran is the first recent serious attempt toward nuclear nonproliferation. Hopefully Congress will support the treaty with Iran. The accord prevents Iran from obtaining nuclear capabilities, and includes robust reporting and verification. Iran will benefit by the end of sanctions – as will U.S. businesses eager to enter that market. Diplomacy rather than military efforts make this a real victory for the U.S.

Such peaceful and just conflict resolution benefits all, and is much more effective in reducing violence. Let’s invest in life-sustaining efforts instead.

Victoria Ross, QCSW, LMSW, MALD, is Peaceful Conflict Resolution Consultant for the WNY Peace Center and the Interfaith Peace Network.

Warrior Connection: Interview on Military Drones

Veteran Doug Rokke produces a radio show called the Warrior Connection that speaks to soldiers about real issues that affect their lives and well being. Judy Bello and Ed Kinane joined the program to talk about the ways in which military drones are used to violate international law, and the fact that the pilots are put in a position where they subject to severe PTSD, working as executioners at the bottom of a kill-chain with military bosses at the top. Listen to Judy Bello and Ed Kinane talk to Doug Rokke about military drones, drone pilots and international law on "[The Warrior Connection](#)" radio show:

http://upstatedroneaction.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/Audio/WarriorConnection_091315.mp3

