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Somalia Ought to be Obama's Litmus Test
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Indeed, the historic victory of President-elect Obama has created profound prospect of hope and change that has swept through America. However, for millions across the world who have witnessed devastation, insecurity and chaos resulting from an imprudent US foreign policy, reality is a nightmare they cannot easily ignore. Here, Somalia comes to mind.

Though Somalia mainly flies under the radar of public scrutiny, Washington has secretly been involved with the third war in addition to Iraq and Afghanistan. This one is fought by proxy on its behalf by Ethiopia which invaded Somalia on Christmas Eve of 2006.

Salim Lone, a former spokesperson for the UN mission in Iraq in 2003, and a columnist for The Daily Nation in Kenya has argued in his column, of a reckless U.S. proxy war:

"The U.S. instigation of war between Ethiopia and Somalia, two of world's poorest countries already struggling with massive humanitarian disasters, is reckless in the extreme."

Before spearheading this proxy war, Washington secretly made a deal with some of the most vicious warlords who styled themselves as a counter-terrorism coalition. Stating Washington's position, Sean McCormack of the State Department had the following to say, "the United States would work with responsible individuals...in fighting terror...terror taking root in the Horn of Africa." Never mind that some of these so-called "responsible individuals" are the same Warlords who fought against US soldiers serving in Operation Restore Hope back in 1993 that killed 18 Army Rangers

during the infamous Black Hawk downing in Mogadishu and thousands of Somali civilians.

Washington's dependence on these abhorred characters has not only empowered the criminals who claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of innocent Somali civilians, but it has consequently created the worst anti-Americanism in Somalia and the region as a whole.

The invasion, aimed to crush the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) brought to an end six months of peace under the courts' control of Mogadishu and, as many analysts warned, triggered relentless violence that rendered Somalia the world's worst humanitarian crisis. Yet, the world remains callously silent.

The latest Amnesty International report on Somalia titled, *Fatal Insecurity*, opens with a profound quote from a Somali human rights defender in exile:

"Even the short man can see the sky, when will the international community see what is happening in Somalia?"

The simple answer might be: when the American and international media turn their attention to the real issues - the political paranoia that caused the Ethiopian occupation. And how both the US and Ethiopia have been in partnership with the very warlords who have been fueling violence since 1991. And lastly, the answer might lie in how Washington's aforementioned partners have succeeded in selling a fabricated intelligence that declared Somalia "a safe haven for terrorists".

The State Department's top Africa official, Assistant Secretary Jendayi Frazer, missed a golden opportunity as she haphazardly pressed the designation of ICU as an entity that is "terrorists to the core". This wholesale condemnation, the equivalent of the infamous de-Bathification in Iraq, has destroyed any and all opportunities to build on a six month peace established by the ICU in Somalia - an era that the Chatham House, a world class think tank based in UK, called "the golden era of peace seen by the Somalis since the start of the Somali civil war."

With the Ethiopian troops' indiscriminate shelling of neighborhoods and committing what some consider war crimes violations, the current US-sponsored occupation continues to create an environment conducive to increased resentment toward America. And this, needless to say, is creating potential anti-US threat where none previously existed.

According to Amnesty International, Ethiopian troops are killing civilians by slitting their throats and gang-raping women. Somali civilians were, according to witnesses, "slaughtered like goats." In the mean time, the world is mesmerized with piracy off the coast of Somalia - a diversion of a more daunting story of over 1 million internally displaced and nearly 3.5 million being on the verge of starvation. And this is overshadowed by the piracy news.

And while the Somali pirates are by no means the Robin Hoods of the sea, their presence has shed light on the inhumane crimes committed against the Somali people and the destruction of its environment. Throughout the civil strife, accusations of the European and Asian countries secretly dumping toxic radioactive waste along the

Somali coast have been circulated. But, it wasn't till the 2005 Tsunami when waste-filled barrels and containers were found on the seashores.

Nick Nuttall, a spokesman for the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), recently told Voice of America that for the past 15 years or so, European companies and others have used Somalia as a dumping ground for a wide array of nuclear and hazardous wastes. "There are reports from villagers of a wide range of medical problems like mouth bleeds, abdominal hemorrhages, unusual skin disorders and breathing difficulties," Nuttall said. Reiterating these vicious crimes by states and non-state entities, Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, UN envoy to Somalia...added: "I am convinced there is dumping of solid waste, chemicals and probably nuclear (waste)...There is no government (control) and there are few people with high moral ground."

Fixing Somalia's multifaceted problems will take time and a collective effort on the part of the international community. However, the most critical step, according to many analysts, is to stop the hemorrhage - the Ethiopian occupation. The second most critical step is immediate humanitarian response; third is a UN Resolution that imposes sanctions on any country caught dumping waste in the Somali coast. Equally important is to chart a holistic, genuine and inclusive political solution to the Somali calamity. All could be spearheaded by the new administration.

In his article, [Somali Piracy and the Enchanting Water Circus](#), (BlackCommentator.com Issue #302) Abukar Arman arrives at a similar conclusion when he says "a starting point for the soon-to-take-office new U.S. Administration is to put this issue on top of its foreign policy priority and to develop a sound policy toward Somalia."

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