

# America's new puppet

By its ill-judged invasion of Somalia, Ethiopia has become an accomplice in Bush's war on terror

Cameron Duodu  
Friday January 5, 2007  
The Guardian

If the 20th century taught us anything, it was that powerful armies can be brought to their knees by small groups of fighters who are not afraid to die. Small Vietnam humiliated mighty America, and the "stone-age" mujahideen of Afghanistan sent the Soviet army packing. With all this so apparent, why has the Ethiopian prime minister, Meles Zenawi, sent his army into Somalia?

The transitional government had been fighting a civil war against the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC). Meles may think the former has the people's backing, but that poses the question: if it's so popular, why does it need the Ethiopian army to fight for it?

Ethiopia fought a war against the Somali government in the late 1970s and early 80s, but there has been peace on the border for over a decade. So Ethiopia cannot point to internal safety concerns in allowing itself to be drawn into invading its neighbor.

The crisis has now escalated sharply with the deployment of US naval forces to prevent UIC fighters from fleeing, the US claiming that some have ties to terrorist organizations, including al-Qaida.

The Ethiopian invasion will certainly be resisted by Somali patriots. It will initially be classified as "successful" because it will establish a semblance of law and order. But the routed UIC, although weakened by internal squabbles, will seek safe havens nearby, regroup and woo back its supporters.

The UIC knows that when faced with a conventional army backed by an air force, the best option is to disappear into the undergrowth or behind the desert dunes. The Somalis have been "disappearing" like that for centuries, always coming back to harass those who claim to have defeated them.

The danger this time is that the resistance will draw in other countries. Eritrea, which fought its own costly war with Ethiopia, does not need

an invitation to help its enemy's enemy. The UIC is also said to be receiving financial assistance from rich leaders of sympathetic Islamic sects, drawn from such countries as Saudi Arabia, Yemen and the Gulf sheikhdoms. And the most explosive fuel will be the involvement of the US on the side of Ethiopia. General John Abizaid, commander for the US central command, is reported to have visited Ethiopia last month, after which Ethiopia moved from providing the Somali government with "military advice" to open armed intervention.

The US objective is to safeguard access to the Red Sea for its oil tankers, and to prevent al-Qaida cells being nurtured in Somalia or in Ethiopia, which has a sizeable Muslim minority. Now, by allowing the US to persuade it to invade, Ethiopia has signaled to the Islamic world that it is willing to join the US in its "war on terror".

Can Ethiopia afford to be universally regarded as a US puppet? In the African Union (AU) - which has its headquarters in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa - US policy is already causing enormous confusion. For months the AU has been trying, unsuccessfully, to persuade the UN security council to bolster the AU force in Darfur, Sudan. Yet within days of Ethiopia's invasion, the security council, under US instigation, was able to pass a resolution asking for an AU force to be sent to Somalia. Clearly, the US wants to legitimize the invasion by placing it under the umbrella of the very AU that it has humiliated for months.

As one of the poorest countries on earth, Ethiopia needs to have the solidarity of the "wretched of the earth". In allowing itself to be associated with George Bush's foreign policy, it is placing itself on the wrong side of the struggle between the weak and the strong.

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Posted by Anonymous on Friday, January 05, 2007 (07:53:50)

## Invading Somalia is no recipe for stability-- Financial Times

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There were essentially two reasonable choices to be made about Somalia prior to Ethiopia's devastating invasion last month and what

looks like the temporary rout of the Islamist alliance that had taken charge of the south and centre of the country.

One was to do nothing and let the Islamists, grouped in the Union of Islamic Courts, get on with it. In the six months they were in control, after all, they provided the first, rough semblance of order since the 1991 collapse of the dictatorship of Mohammed Siad Barre plunged the country into a long night of anarchy and warlordism.

The second, complementary option was to see whether it was possible to do business with the Islamists, whose legitimacy among Somalis was certainly no less than that of the largely theoretical but internationally recognized transitional government Ethiopia claims to have intervened to support.

What we have instead is an invasion, backed by the US, behind a government with no apparent social base. If the Ethiopians stay they risk uniting much of Somalia against them. If they go, as they say they soon will, they will leave a political vacuum, with Somalia's well-armed clans scrabbling over the carcass of the country. Eventually, it will almost certainly be the more disciplined but now radicalized Islamists that end up holding the ring.

We are, in short, looking at yet another geopolitical disaster, which could spread fighting across the Horn of Africa, a region at the crossroads of the Middle East and Africa that is already blighted by floods and drought, famine and desertification, with a long history of conflict. To the north, Ethiopia's arch-rival, Eritrea, is already sending arms to the Islamists, while, to the south, the fighting has reached the borders of north-east Kenya.

Admittedly, Somalia has presented peculiar difficulties since it imploded as a state 15 years ago. Its people emerged shattered from colonialism. Although among the most homogeneous in Africa, with the same language and Muslim religion and largely from the same ethnic group, they have built their identities around six rival clans and tributaries of feuding sub-clans.

One can see moreover, why Somalia presses so many American buttons. As a failed state in transition from warlords' rule to an Islamist emirate, it resembles Afghanistan. The humiliation of the failed US intervention in Mogadishu in 1993 – the Black Hawk Down episode – ranks with the headlong retreat of US marines from Beirut a decade earlier. A quick, ostensible victory must also have looked very

tempting for a Bush administration responsible for the debacle in Iraq.

Washington claims the Union of Islamic Courts is allied to al-Qaeda. That looks as doubtful as the recent record of US intelligence. Certainly, the Islamist alliance has its extremists. Their influence and audience is now set to grow exponentially. And Somalia could indeed become a new magnet for and incubator of jihadi terrorism – just as Iraq did after the US invasion.

This invasion is not the answer to Somalia's problems. Whatever the intentions of Addis Ababa and the increasingly assertive government of Meles Zenawi, the Ethiopian leader, his country is too poor and, with very long borders, too porous to stay in Somalia.

The transitional government, by itself, lacks all credibility. It was created in Nairobi and confined, until last month's invasion, to Baidoa, close to Ethiopia's border. It never asserted its authority; its prime minister, Ali Mohammed Gedi, does not even command the support of his sub-clan.

The Islamist alliance was able to restore order in Mogadishu and even open the ports. Its methods are brutal but Sharia law is widely accepted and, in current conditions, welcomed in Somalia. The Islamists, moreover, are not going away. Their retreat looks like the tactical prelude to guerrilla war.

The future looks bleak unless an understanding is reached between the Islamists and the transitional government, with Ethiopian troops replaced by some stabilising force. That probably has to come from the United Nations, in conjunction with the African Union. Neither organisation has covered itself in glory recently, in Sudan or Somalia, and both are overstretched. But the price of failure in the Horn of Africa will be high indeed.

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[Posted by Anonymous on Thursday, January 04, 2007 \(07:28:37\)](#)

# What's Really Behind Ethiopia's Invasion of Somalia?

New America Media, News Analysis, Donal Brown, Posted: Jan 01, 2007

*Editor's Note: Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia may be guided less by the war against Islamist terrorism and more by narrow territorial goals of the Addis Ababa government, writes Donal Brown, an associate editor at New America Media.*

Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia may have more sinister goals than meet the eye,

Keith Harmon Snow, a leading investigator of genocide in Africa, who worked for UNICEF, says that Ethiopia itself is a terrorist nation that is using the invasion to gain legitimacy with its own people and the international community. By fighting a patriotic war, the government seeks to mute opposition at home and criticisms of human rights violations and political repression.

It also wants to divert criticism for its failure to comply with the World Court's ruling to return disputed territory to Eritrea as well as consolidate its position in its land dispute with Eritrea. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi claims the invasion aims to restore the United Nations-sanctioned government in Somalia and prevent Islamist forces from establishing a terrorist stronghold in the horn of Africa.

But those familiar with the situation in Somalia doubt it could ever provide a haven for Al Qaeda let alone jihadists coming from all over the Middle East. Most jihadists do not speak Somali and few speak Arabic. They would stand out too much with their different eating habits and

clothing. It would be difficult for a bone-poor country like Somalia to support an influx of foreigners.

The Somalians, who just want to end the constant fighting, are once again facing an uncertain future. The Islamists have faded away, discredited for shutting down schools and sending children to their deaths against the superior Ethiopian army. Never extremely religious anyway, Somalians now will have to contend with clans--more corrupt than the Islamists and prone to infighting—that have been restored to power,.

In Addis Ababa, meanwhile, President Meles is facing big problems. He is losing the support of the Oromo people, backing that he needs to retain power. After the May 2005 elections, initially praised by the international community for the unprecedented participation of the opposition, Meles stifled inquiries into the legitimacy of the results. He reacted to public protests by jailing protesters, journalists, human rights workers and opposition leaders including the newly elected mayor of Addis Ababa. An independent inquiry revealed that Ethiopian security forces killed 193 unarmed protesters in 2005.

Ethiopia's human rights record in the provinces is even more heinous, says Obang Metho of the Saskatchewan, Canada-based Anuak Justice Council, a human rights group seeking to protect the Anuak minority in Ethiopia. Metho says few people in Europe and the West realize what is going on in the shadow of Darfur.

"He [Meles] has been an agent of terror in Sidana, Ogalen, Oromo, Anhar, Tigray, Gambella [Anuak region] and continues to perpetuate brutality, oppression and suppression to his people throughout all of Ethiopia," Metho says.

Metho claims that besides killing off the Anuaks, the Ethiopian national

Defense Forces (ENDF) since December 15 had conscripted 600 to 700 young Anuak men and taken them to northern Ethiopia to train as soldiers. Many young men fled to the bush to escape conscription.

Metho and Snow agree that the Anuaks are facing genocide. Snow says Anuak rebels were allies of Meles in throwing out the hated Dergue government in 1991, but soon afterward, Meles turned against them.

Unable to conduct aid operations in Gambella, UNICEF commissioned Snow to do a report on the situation. In this poor and remote region, Snow found that, the ENDF was going into villages, destroying mud and straw dwellings and forcing the people to leave, under the pretext of weeding out terrorists.

"In August the military forcibly displaced all Anuak people from some 13 to 15 Anuak villages in the remote and already devastated regions," Snow notes. Left with no options many Anuaks are going to larger towns or to southern Sudan and refugee camps in Kenya. People are restrained from moving about so it is difficult to attend school, gather firewood, travel to sources of water or conduct trade.

For an Anuak civilian, there is a "daily risk of being shot, raped, beaten, tortured or harassed," according to the Harvard Law School's International Human Right Clinic (IHRC) report on the situation in Gambella.

The Ethiopian government has been accused of trying to remove Anuak rebels from Gambella so that oil wells can be drilled. Snow says there are Chinese and Malaysian interests already setting up camps with electricity and clean water (amenities not available to Anuaks) and

enticing  
local women into prostitution.

Metho says, "The Bush administration has never done anything [to recognize the atrocities in Gambella]." Metho wants the U.S. to put pressure on the Ethiopian government to ease up on the Anuaks and to investigate the killings.

Snow says all forms of support to the Meles government should be withdrawn. Angelina Jolie and others, he urged should stop adopting children from Ethiopia and stand up for the ordinary Ethiopians under threat of death from the government. He discourages African Americans from traveling to Ethiopia, their second most popular destination after Ghana. All aid organizations, he said, should pull out of Ethiopia.

"They [the aid workers] need to start talking about what they are seeing, that Ethiopia is a terrorist

## Somali Government Compound Hit by Grenade

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**THE HISTORY BOYS**  
By [JEFFREY GETTLEMAN](#)  
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**KISMAYO, Somalia, Jan. 4 — A hand grenade was tossed into a government compound today in Mogadishu, Somalia's capital, in yet another sign of a growing insurgency as security seems to be unraveling across the country.**

Just days after Ethiopian-led troops helped rout Somalia's once powerful Islamist forces and install a new government in the capital, violence is surging in the form of anti-government attacks and increased banditry, both of which were mostly unheard of during the Islamists' short-lived reign.

Witnesses said that shortly after nightfall, a man in a pickup truck flung a grenade over a wall and into a compound that housed Ethiopian and government soldiers. Apparently, no one was seriously hurt and the pickup truck escaped in a blaze of gunfire.

In northern Mogadishu, residents said that four people were killed Wednesday night after bandits fired a bazooka at a truck whose driver refused to pay an extortion tax. Unauthorized checkpoints have popped up all over the city, reminiscent of the years of anarchy when clan-based militias carved up Mogadishu and much of the rest of Somalia.

In Dhagtur, in central Somalia, Shabelle radio reported today that five people, including two children, were killed by a tribal militia during a gun battle. A dispute over a well was cited as the possible cause.

But despite the thickening bloodshed, Somalia's newly-empowered transitional government is not slowing down. Today, Ali Mohammed Gedi, the veterinarian-turned-prime minister, appointed more than 30 new judges, including two women.

"Quite soon, the police stations in Mogadishu will be operational," Mr. Gedi said. "If a criminal is arrested, the police will have the access to put the criminal on trial."

It sounds simple, but since Somalia's central government collapsed in 1991, the wheels of justice have rusted over, with few functioning police stations, jails or courts. Mr. Gedi also pushed ahead with his disarmament plan, extending today's deadline by two more days and threatening house-to-house searches if people did not turn in their guns.

In Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni said today that his country was ready to volunteer about 800 soldiers to serve as

peacekeepers in Somalia. The [African Union](#) is trying to cobble together a peacekeeping force to take the place of Ethiopian troops and lend much needed muscle to the transitional government.

The transitional government is still battling the last remnants of the Islamist forces, who have fled to a remote, heavily-forested area in southern Somalia along the Kenyan border. Somali officials said that several hundred Islamist fighters were cornered and it was only matter of days until the Islamist movement, which had ruled much of Somalia for the past six months until Ethiopian forces intervened, was finished for good.

*Mohammed Ibrahim and Yusuuf Maxamuud contributed reporting from Mogadishu.*

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**Some fear ex-warlords are back**  
**Elizabeth A. Kennedy, Associated Press Writer**  
**January 2, 2007**

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For more than 10 years, Mohamed Qanyare Afrah was one of the handful of warlords who ruled this city. He had thousands of militiamen under his control and ran the southern part of Somalia's seaside capital as his personal fiefdom. With no effective Somali government, warlords such as Afrah were Mogadishu's political leaders, judges, jailers and executioners until they were driven from the capital by Islamic militants six months ago.

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Last week, a new Somali government retook Mogadishu with the help of Ethiopian troops. Now, Afrah is back ? and some fear the rule of the warlord is too.



Abdi Noure Siad, left, and Mohammad Qanyareh Afrah, right, both former war lords in Mogadishu meet again in Mogadishu, Somalia Sunday Dec 31, 2006, for the first time in the city after they were defeated by the Islamic courts in June. (AP/GUY CALAF)

"I have 1,500 militiamen under my control," Afrah told The Associated Press on Sunday from the home he returned to on Friday, a compound stocked with weapons including 12 armored vehicles mounted with double-barreled anti-aircraft guns. "And why not? An angry man is an angry man. We need to protect ourselves."

The Council of Islamic Courts terrified Somalis by meting out harsh punishment for infractions of their strict interpretation of Islam. But the militant movement also brought a semblance of order to the city for the first time in years, in part by driving out the warlords' militias.

Now nervous residents in Mogadishu report seeing freelance gunmen roaming the streets again. One man, who refused to give his name for fear of retribution, said he no longer felt safe.

"The warlords are coming back," he said.

Afrah, in his first interview with the international media since June, said government control of Mogadishu is an illusion.

The government, is utterly dependent on neighboring Ethiopia, which has the region's most powerful armed forces, he said.

"If Ethiopian forces pull out tomorrow, (the Islamists) will come back the following day," he said.

Islamic militants were still in Mogadishu in hiding and would launch "urban guerrilla warfare" with land mines and explosives, he said.

"People will live in terror and fear."

The government insists it has control of the city, but has appealed for peacekeepers.

Afrah had led a U.S.-backed warlord alliance against the Islamic movement until its defeat in June.

The warlords, most of them clan based, ruled the African nation of 8 million after overthrowing longtime dictator Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991. They divided the country into a patchwork of rival fiefdoms, plunging the country into chaos.

Two years ago, a transitional central government was set up with the help of the United Nations. But it failed to assert control until last week, after Ethiopia stepped in.

The government has little popular support. One factor may be the participation of former warlords, including Afrah, a member of Parliament.

Afrah said he supports disarming the city's gunmen, but would not tell his militia to surrender its weapons unless Parliament passes legislation stating the government's specific aims.

Prime Minister Mohamed Ali Gedi said Saturday he expected to disarm Mogadishu within three weeks. Afrah called that wishful thinking.

"From Somaliland to Kismayo, the guns are everywhere," Afrah said. "But the word of one man with one microphone cannot solve this."