

# US missile strike kills women and children in Somalia

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**4 March 2008**

The US military fired missiles at a town in southern Somalia in the pre-dawn hours of Monday morning, killing and wounding civilians. Local officials in the town of Dobley told news agencies that at least three women and three children were killed in the attack and another 20 wounded.

Fatuma Abdullah, a resident of Dobley, told the BBC that he and other residents were awakened by the sound of explosions. “When we came out we found our neighbor’s house completely obliterated, as if no house existed there.”

Witnesses said that at least three missiles struck the town, which is just north of the Kenyan border. This is the fourth such US attack on the impoverished East African country in the space of 14 months.

There were conflicting reports as to the specific source of the attack. The Associated Press stated that US naval forces, armed with cruise missiles, were responsible. The AP cited an unnamed Pentagon official who said that the bombardment was carried out with Tomahawk missiles fired from a US submarine.

Other attacks have been carried out from American warships, which constantly patrol Somalia’s 1,800-mile coast, which borders strategically key shipping routes between the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean.

Reports from witnesses in Dobley, however, cited the presence of AC130 attack gunships, the type of aircraft the US used in attacking the same area in January of last year. A resident of the town speaking by phone to the BBC said, “Right now—in full daylight—the planes keep flying over us. They are so low that we’re deafened by their engines. We are poor civilians living in a simple town. What have we done to deserve this bombing?”

“I woke up to loud blasts and flashing lights that shook my doors and windows. Airplanes were flying at a low altitude and were firing. I ran outside and hid under trees,” Saed Abdulle, a Dobley elder, told the German news agency DPA.

Many residents were reported fleeing the town for fear that the American military would continue raining death from the

sky.

Predictably, Washington justified the slaughter in the name of the “war on terrorism.” A Pentagon official described it as “a deliberate, precise strike against a known terrorist and his associates.” Defense Department spokesman Bryan Whitman told the media, “As we have repeatedly said, we will continue to pursue terrorist activities and their operations wherever we may find them.”

The global eruption of US militarism is producing such “precision strikes” by Washington and its surrogates with increasing frequency in every corner of the globe. The attack on civilians in Somalia comes less than a week after the dispatch of warships to the coast of Lebanon, posing an ominous threat of US military intervention against opposition forces in Lebanon itself, as well as in support of Washington’s ally, Israel, as it employs US-supplied weapons to carry out devastating attacks on the Palestinian population of Gaza.

Meanwhile, in Latin America, the government of Colombia, the Bush administration’s principal regional ally—and the fifth largest recipient of US military aid after Israel, Egypt, Pakistan and Afghanistan—has brought the region to the brink of war by massacring leading members of the FARC guerrilla movement in a cross-border raid against their camp in Ecuador. The Colombian counter-insurgency forces operate under the supervision of US Special Forces “advisors” and utilize American intelligence to direct such attacks.

In other regions, the US administration proceeds with equal recklessness, as in the drive to sever Kosovo from Serbia and the continuous provocations against Iran.

All the while, the US military remains bogged down in the quagmires created by the US invasions and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan.

There is, no doubt, an element of political calculation by the Bush administration in pursuing such policies as it enters its last ten months in office. The Republican Party intends to contest the November elections on the basis of a fear-mongering campaign, proclaiming the ubiquitous threat of

terrorism and the need for strong “national security.” The greater the global instability created by US actions, the more fodder they will have for such an effort.

More fundamentally, the explosive spread of American militarism is rooted in the deepening crisis of US capitalism, reflected in the precipitous fall of the dollar and the cancerous spread of a credit crisis that is increasingly manifested in the contraction of production and employment. As the economic foundations of the US claim to global hegemony weaken, the American ruling elite is driven to ever greater reliance on its residual military superiority.

Somalia provides a case study in the immense destruction and human suffering produced by this policy. The Bush administration helped engineer and backed an Ethiopian invasion to overthrow the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), the regime formed by the Somalia’s Islamic courts, businessmen and some local and regional officials, with significant popular support, in opposition to the officially recognized Transitional Federal Government, dominated by CIA-backed warlords. The ICU established its control over the vast majority of the country, including the capital of Mogadishu, expelling the warlords and establishing civil order, the distribution of food and provision of basic services for the first time in nearly 15 years.

Washington charged that the ICU was tied to Al Qaeda and was harboring terrorists responsible for the 1998 bombings of American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The ICU leaders denied both charges.

In December of last year, some 50,000 Ethiopian troops, backed by US Special Forces units and American air power, swept into Somalia and deposed the ICU.

The subsequent 14 months of Ethiopian occupation have succeeded only in provoking a growing popular insurgency that has deprived the US-backed regime of effective control of virtually any part of the country, including the capital, while unleashing the worst humanitarian crisis on the African continent.

Mogadishu has turned into a ghost town, with the city’s residents fleeing the violence and repression, and the majority living in squalid camps outside the city. Fighting continues to rage in the capital, while guerrilla forces loyal to the ICU have had increasing success in overrunning towns in the south of the country.

The principal motivation of the US missile strike Monday morning was apparently the fact that these forces had established control over Doble, and one their senior leaders, Hassan Turki, (described by Washington as a “financer of terrorism”), was believed to be there.

Last month, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported,

“There are up to two million vulnerable people in need of assistance in the country. In the capital Mogadishu, the number of people escaping the city to the poorest areas of the Horn of Africa nation has doubled to 700,000 in the last six months.”

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), meanwhile, warned that some 90,000 children face imminent threat of death from malnutrition. In addition to hunger, the areas with a large concentration of internally displaced persons are being ravaged by cholera and other diseases.

Thousands have been killed by the Ethiopian occupation troops and their Somali government allies. Many more have been arbitrarily arrested.

The nature of the US-backed regime found clear expression Sunday when hundreds of heavily armed government troops raided the country’s three main radio stations—the country’s principal source of news—beating and arresting staff members, destroying or confiscating equipment and taking them off the air. Nine journalists have been killed in the country in the past year and scores have been forced into exile. The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists has ranked the country the second deadliest for journalists, trailing only Iraq.

It is noteworthy that the missile attack on Somalia comes little more than a week after Bush’s tour of Africa. In many ways, Somalia represents a model for American strategy in the region, based on the use of the armies of African regimes as surrogates, aided and directed by US forces, to secure Washington’s interests. This strategy has been developed since the US military was driven out of Somalia in 1993 in the well-known “Black Hawk down” incident, which claimed the lives of 19 American troops. It is now being employed in alliance with some of the same warlords that the US forces were fighting 15 years ago.

The aim of the White House and the Pentagon is to develop its new African military command—Africom—to apply this same brutal strategy throughout the continent in a bid to secure American control of key oil and other natural resources and to beat back the incursions of US capitalism’s increasingly important competitor in the region, China.



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