

Clinton visit to Algeria prepares war in Mali

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The Bamako conference is hosting officials from the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and European Union (EU). Opening the conference, Malian defence minister Yamoussa Camara said that war was inevitable, adding: “This conference is a meeting of harmonisation, which must lead to concrete proposals for the adoption of a strategic plan to liberate the north of our country.”

On October 12, a UN Security Council resolution gave ECOWAS until November 26 to offer detailed plans for military intervention in Mali. ECOWAS has already announced the deployment of 3,000 troops in Mali and is awaiting final UN Security Council approval.

The conference is taking place under the aegis of imperialist powers including the US and France, which are pressing for military intervention. They aim to use African troops as proxies against Islamist forces—including Ansar Dine and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA), both linked to Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)—that have been active in northern Mali since this March.

At this point, Mali plunged into civil war, after Tuareg forces fleeing US-controlled Libya returned to northern Mali and took control of the region. These Tuareg-nationalist forces are organised in the National Movement for Liberation of the Azawad (MNLA), which joined with Islamist groups in taking control of the region. The rebels’ victory in the North led to a military coup in Bamako, ousting longtime president Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT).

Clinton’s visit to Algiers aimed to secure the support of Algeria, the major regional military power, for war in Mali. She argued strongly for military intervention as the primary strategy. One US official said: “The secretary underscored...that it is very clear that a

political process and our counter-terrorism efforts in Mali need to work in parallel.”

Both France and the US see Algerian participation in the military intervention as vital. Before Clinton’s visit, a US State Department official said, “We have an awful lot at stake here, and an awful lot of common interests, and there’s a strong recognition that Algeria has to be a central part of the solution.”

After Clinton’s visit, the press reported that Algeria had approved the participation in the intervention in Mali. An Algerian Foreign Affairs Ministry official said, “The discussions between President Bouteflika and Mrs. Clinton addressed more the details of Algeria’s participation than the principle of it.”

Clinton’s visit came after Algeria and the US held a first-ever US-Algerian strategic dialogue in Washington on October 19, focused on strengthening cooperation between both countries at the political, security and economic levels.

The Algerian FLN (National Liberation Front) regime cynically poses at home as a critic of imperialist policies. However, Clinton’s visit underscores that the FLN, 50 years after its independence from France, does not oppose imperialist policies in the region. It is reportedly coordinating military plans with the imperialist powers.

It has deployed more than 25,000 troops along the Malian and Libyan borders and allowed the CIA to install its Maghreb-Sahel regional headquarters in Algeria.

US and French officers and diplomats are holding talks to facilitate intervention plans, provide logistical support for an invasion, and deploy surveillance drones. Top US State Department and US Africa Command (AFRICOM) officials travelled to Paris for a security summit to discuss the Sahel region, in which Mali is located. The EU also announced a “Mali mission,” deploying military experts to train Malian and African

troops over a four-to-six-month period.

Preparations for another war are proceeding in defiance of public opinion in both France and the US, which is hostile to wars in Afghanistan and Libya and the ongoing proxy war in Syria.

Washington and Paris cynically present their plans for war in Mali as part of the so-called war on terror. Last week, US defence secretary Leon Panetta vowed to eliminate the threat from “al-Qaeda” in northern Mali, claiming that Al Qaeda would have “no place to hide.”

Such comments are hypocritical. The US and France relied on Al Qaeda forces in the war against Libya to topple Colonel Muammar Gaddafi’s regime. In the US-led proxy war to oust Bashar al-Assad government in Syria, US intelligence and its allies arm and rely on the same Al Qaeda and reactionary Islamist forces in stoking civil war.

France’s military intervention in Mali is prepared by the Socialist Party (PS) government of President François Hollande, who has called for an “African-led” military intervention in Mali “as quickly as possible.” Hollande is expected to visit Algeria in December.

French defence officials told AP they plan to send two surveillance drones to western Africa from Afghanistan by the end of 2012. France has deployed Special Forces in the region—including to Ivory Coast, Senegal, and Chad—and contracted out surveillance in Mali to private firms. *Intelligence Online* reported that France has contracted Luxembourg-based CAE Aviation to monitor parts of north Mali and neighbouring western Niger.

The imperialist intervention is reportedly planned for early next year, in particular before the rainy season. According to *Le Monde*, its main phases will be “a consolidation of Malian sovereignty in the south of the country and its capital, Bamako; then the preparation of three or four Malian battalions on which African armies and their European allies can rely to face the northern groups. After the retaking of several [northern] cities—Gao, Timbuktu—the stabilisation of the north will follow, in March. The plan includes bombings and the intervention of Special Forces. The United States will furnish intelligence capabilities.”

AP quoted US officials, who said “the US has already expanded its Mali-related intelligence effort with satellite and spy flights over the north to track and map

the rebels.”



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