

US seizes on video to escalate repression at home and war in Somalia

Thomas Gaist
24 February 2015

US officials vowed Sunday to ramp up domestic surveillance and covert operations targeting “extremism” in immigrant communities, in response to a video, apparently produced by the Somalia-based militant group al Shabaab, threatening attacks against malls in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom.

The video specifically cited the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota, located near the largest concentration of Somali immigrants in the US, as a possible target.

Despite admitting that there is no direct evidence of preparations for an attack and encouraging mall-goers to continue shopping, US security officials are proclaiming that the threat justifies a huge expansion of domestic covert operations aimed at identifying “extremists.”

In a special joint statement Sunday, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) revealed that they have already been working in tandem with police departments at the state and local level for “months” to coordinate the expansion of such operations.

“In recent months, the FBI and DHS have worked closely with our state and local public safety counterparts and members of the private sector, to include mall owners and operators, to prevent and mitigate these types of threats,” the statement said.

The DHS has launched “engagements” along these lines in Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Columbus, Chicago and Boston, Department of Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson revealed during last week’s Summit on Countering Violent Extremism at the White House.

Interviewed on “Meet the Press,” Johnson claimed that the al Shabaab video represents a qualitative

escalation of the threat posed by extremist groups, proving the need for aggressive DHS intelligence programs

“We’re in a new phase in global terrorist threat right now. The public needs to be particularly vigilant. ‘If you see something, say something’ has to be more than a slogan,” Johnson said.

Johnson warned that social media is enabling terrorist groups to “inspire independent actors” in “communities” and “homelands.”

“We need a military approach. But also, a whole of government approach, a Homeland Security law enforcement approach, which includes countering violent extremism engagements and initiatives here on the homeland,” Johnson said.

“We need to be involved in the relevant communities in this country,” Johnson said, in a barely concealed appeal for the expansion of counter-intelligence targeting Muslim immigrant communities.

The FBI has a “huge job in front of them,” former top FBI official Jim Kallstrom told *Fox News*, calling for heightened security at US malls and border crossings.

The New York Police Department has seized on the incident to ratchet up its own preparations for counter-insurgency operations against the US population, implementing “precautionary measures” and placing personnel on high alert.

Under the guise of combating extremism, the US ruling elite is kick-starting a campaign of persecution and intimidation against Somali and immigrant communities as one component of generalized preparations for mass repression against the working class as a whole.

Aside from providing the rationale for a fresh round of police-state measures inside the US, the hyping of

the al Shabaab video by the media is bound up with efforts to condition public opinion, in advance, for new military operations in the Horn of Africa and other hotspots across the African continent. Some 120 US Special Forces personnel are already deployed in Somalia as part of an undeclared war that has been waged since at least 2007, the US government finally revealed last year.

The video comes just days after the US issued a formal condemnation of al Shabaab in connection with a bombing attack on a hotel in Mogadishu that killed a top minister in the Somali government. Hellfire missiles launched by a US drone on January 31, killed at least five Somalis, four of them civilians, according to witnesses cited by *Agence France-Press* (AFP). Two other drone strikes in January against Somali targets killed at least 45 in a single day, according to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism (BIJ).



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact