

US Marines deploy to South Sudan

Thomas Gaist
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The United States military's Africa Command (AFRICOM) deployed dozens of Marines to South Sudan Wednesday, amid clashes between opposed factions of the Sudanese government that have left more than 270 dead over the past week.

"These deployed personnel will remain in South Sudan until the security situation becomes such that their presence is no longer needed," an Obama White House statement said. Some 130 additional US troops are on standby to reinforce the Marine deployment if necessary, the White House said.

Wednesday's deployment, carried out in the name of protecting US citizens, marks the latest escalation in the decades-long drive of US imperialism to assert control over Sudan and its massive oil resources, estimated by Chevron research to include "more oil than Iran and Saudi Arabia together." Over the past decade, the US ruling class has sought to repartition Sudan, cultivating elements of the local elite in the country's oil rich south and continuously ratcheting up pressure against the northern government.

The US-orchestrated Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), signed between Sudan's government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) in January 2005, was designed as an initial step toward opening the southern oil fields to US and European firms. It came as the culmination of protracted efforts by Washington and London aimed at weakening Sudan's central government and imposing more direct neocolonial rule. Washington forced the agreement on the Khartoum government by backing the SPLM with ample weapons and military aid, a policy which was continued in secret even after the 2005 CPA officially ended the civil war.

As late as 2008, the continuing US aid to the separatist forces, including tanks and anti-aircraft systems, was exposed by the seizure of a boatload of Sudan-bound weapons by Somali pirates. In 2010, the

Obama administration moved to force the question, offering to remove Sudan from Washington's "state sponsors of terrorism" list, in exchange for government backing of the southern independence referendum sought by the US and European powers.

When finalized in June 2011, the formal partition of Sudan established South Sudan as the world's newest internationally recognized country. The main effect of the partition was to transfer some 80 percent of the country's oil resources into the hands of the US-proxy government in Juba, dealing a punishing blow to Chinese economic interests in Sudan, where the Chinese National Petroleum Company has invested more than \$20 billion to develop oil production.

At the time of the partition, Sudanese petrol accounted for nearly one-third of China's total oil imports, and Chinese producers controlled as much as 60 percent of Sudan's oil resources, benefiting from the exclusion of American corporations by Washington's imposition of sanctions against Sudan after 1993.

Given the scale of Chinese interests involved, the numerically small deployment of US troops carries outsized significance and points to the global dangers posed by increasingly aggressive American military encroachments against Beijing's economic influence on the continent.

As the bloodletting in recent days made clear, the imperialist-orchestrated partition has paved the way for further eruptions of civil war, fatally undermining the economy of northern Sudan and propelling the Khartoum and Suba governments into clashes over control of contested border provinces of Abyei and South Kordofan.

Thousands of South Sudanese have been killed and over 2 million displaced as a result of internal faction fighting since the passage of the US-backed independence referendum in 2011. The European

powers are seizing on the violence, which has the appearance of the initial stages of a re-eruption of full-blown civil war, to enlarge their military and security presence.

Germany's air force launched new patrols over Sudan this week, in the name of protecting and evacuating German nationals. On Monday, an official French government statement threatened new sanctions against Sudanese elites and announced the establishment of a "crisis cell" in Juba. Last October, the British government announced plans to deploy troops to Somalia and South Sudan.

The renewed intervention in Sudan is the latest chapter in the protracted drive of Washington and the European powers to reassert unchecked military and political domination over their former colonial holdings.

This agenda has been carried forward at every step with unconcealed contempt for African lives. In August 1998, the Clinton administration provocatively demonstrated the determination of the American ruling class to subjugate Sudan and steal its natural riches, attacking the Al-Shifa pharmaceutical factory, the largest such medicinal plant in Khartoum. The factory, one of the few components of advanced social infrastructure owned by the impoverished African nation, was claimed to be a chemical weapons factory run by al Qaeda. It since became clear that the bombing was a deliberate effort to degrade Sudan's infrastructure and terrorize its population, as the US government proved unable to muster any evidence in support of claims that Al-Shifa was manufacturing nerve gas.

The bombing of Al-Shifa foreshadowed the brutality that has come to characterize US Africa policy since 9/11 and the launching of the "Global War on Terror." The crimes of the Clinton administration against Africa pale by comparison with those perpetrated by the latest Democratic administration of President Barack Obama, which has overseen the complete destruction of Libya and the ever growing militarization of Central and West Africa, including the establishment of a massive new "anti-terror" war zone centered around the Lake Chad Basin.

The fate of Sudan shows in microcosm the agenda being pursued by Washington throughout the entire ex- and semi-colonial world, which is to be smashed apart

and redivided in accordance with the needs of the dominant capitalist governments.



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