

Bombings kill hundreds in Somali capital

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17 October 2017

Twin bombings in central areas of Somalia's capital of Mogadishu Saturday killed at least 302 people and injured 300 others, with the death toll expected to climb. Unknown numbers are still missing.

The attacks occurred in Mogadishu's K5 district, which hosts government offices and upscale restaurants and hotels. The bombings, which killed top government officials, including Humanitarian Affairs Director Mohamoud Elmi, are described by witnesses and analysts as "unprecedented" and "the worst" in recent Somali history.

Nearly all of the dead were killed by the first bomb, which exploded outside a popular hotel near a busy intersection in Mogadishu, sending a plume of smoke into the sky that could be seen from across the city. The second truck bomb killed a few more people nearby.

Al-Shabaab, the Somali Islamist militia, which government officials believe to be behind the attack, has not claimed responsibility. In speaking to the likelihood of Al-Shabaab carrying out the attack, Matt Bryden, security consultant with the International Crisis Group for the Horn of Africa, told the Associated Press, "No other group in Somalia has the capacity to put together a bomb of this size, in this nature."

The deadly attack comes as the Trump administration has escalated Washington's military offensive against Al-Shabaab. Early in his administration, Trump authorized looser rules of engagement for US commanders in Somalia as well as a new wave of US troop deployments. In July, the White House approved a series of drone strikes against Al-Shabaab strongholds in southern Somalia.

Indicating the attack is under consideration as a pretext for further US military escalation, US officials stated to the media, "Such cowardly attacks reinvigorate the commitment of the United States to assist our Somali and African Union partners to combat the scourge of terrorism."

While the precise extent of US involvement in Somalia is kept almost entirely secret from the public, during the past year a series of announcements and official leaks from both the Obama and Trump administrations, together with discussions between Washington and European governments, have made clear that Washington is looking to escalate its military presence in the country.

During the May 12-13 London Conference on Somalia, the plans for carving up the country by Washington with support from Britain were made clear. Topics discussed included strategies for an intensified buildup of military forces inside Somalia, and for the further breakup of Somalia's central state structure via devolution of power to regional governments in Somaliland and Puntland.

What was clear at the conference in London is that Somalia is being used as a central testing ground for the neocolonial policies and methods of the imperialist powers. The "Somalia campaign," enacted under Obama and continued by the Trump administration, which calls for an increased US troop presence in the country, is viewed as a "blueprint for new wars across the Middle East and Africa" according to senior government officials cited by the *New York Times* last year.

At least 300 American commandos are involved in daily military operations in Somalia alongside Somali, Ugandan, Kenyan and Ethiopian soldiers, with reports of US forces engaging directly in combat operations. US soldiers and mercenaries are leading ongoing training of Somali commandos at a secret base at Baledogle airport near Mogadishu.

Recent Al-Shabaab successes, including the overrunning of a Somali government military base and African Union bases manned by Burundian, Ugandan, and Kenyan troops earlier this year, have shown the ability of Al-Shabaab to exploit the mass hatred toward

the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) government, which was installed via US-backed Ethiopian and Kenyan invasions, and has been propped up by a military occupation enforced by US-backed the African Union multinational army.

The chaotic state of Somali society is a consequence of the military efforts of US imperialism and its African puppets during the 25 years since the 1989-1991 breakup of the USSR, which was allied in different periods with Somalia and Ethiopia. Enlisting the regime of Siad Barre to counter Soviet influence in the Horn of Africa, Washington supported Mogadishu with millions of dollars in weaponry.

After 1991, Washington abruptly withdrew its support for Somalia and the sudden removal of US aid to Mogadishu led immediately to the collapse of the central government. The resulting chaos was in turn exploited by American military-intelligence and corporate-financial entities to begin a neocolonial carve-up of the country.

A major factor in Washington's drive for dominance over the Horn of Africa is the region's strategic importance abutting the waterway for much of the world's oil traffic flowing through the Red Sea from the Persian Gulf.

China's increased economic influence in recent decades in nearly all sectors of Africa's economy is another major concern. Washington views Beijing as an intolerable rival to be neutralized. Ratcheting up the tensions even further are Beijing's establishment of a naval base in Djibouti, its first outside Chinese waters.

Saturday's attacks only underscore the catastrophic results produced by imperialist intervention. Despite a decade of brutal war and counterinsurgency against Al-Shabaab, the US-backed TFG in Mogadishu is a puppet regime with no popular support anywhere in the country and is unable to control even the most critical areas of its own capital.

Washington's criminal role has led to the complete destruction of Somali society. Dysfunctional and corrupt, the US-backed government in Mogadishu is unable to provide basic infrastructure, such as sanitary water facilities or decent health care, and an epidemic of treatable diseases such as cholera has ensued. Washington's nearly three-decade imperialist offensive against the country has created the conditions for the rise of such extremist groups as Al-Shabaab.



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