

“Balkanising Somalia”: Eritrea blames US for Somali piracy

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The Eritrean Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a statement has blamed Washington's alleged policy of "balkanising Somalia" for being the root cause behind piracy off the Somali coast, adding that breakaway Somaliland and Puntland must return to Somalia to create a forceful unit.

According to the official Eritrean statement, it is the US government that stands behind the political split currently experienced in Somalia. Somaliland – a former British colony uniting with Italian Somalia in 1960 but declaring independence again in 1991 – the autonomous region of Puntland, and other areas held by local warlords all were the product of "reckless" US policies aimed at splitting Somalia, the Asmara Ministry holds.

Also the serious problem of Somali piracy could therefore be blamed on Washington, Eritrea holds. "The main cause of this problem is the vacuum that has been created for the last 17 years in Somalia," the statement said. "Sadly, an enduring solution is not conceivable until the reckless acts of the US and its surrogates aimed at balkanising Somalia, dividing its people along ethnic and clan lines ... cease," it adds.

"The solution lies, accordingly, in the liberation and reconstitution of a united and sovereign Somalia," Asmara officials hold. "Unless and until the entire Somali people – whether they are in the so-called 'Somali-land', 'Punt-land', 'Juba-land' or 'Benadir-land' – extricate themselves from the malaise of fragmentation to bring about their own enduring solution by themselves, piracy and other deplorable activities will not indeed cease," they add.

This is not the first time the Eritrean government calls for unity among "the entire Somali people." Somalis also dominate large tracts of Ethiopia – Eritrea's arch enemy – Kenya and Djibouti. It has been documented that Eritrea has sponsored and trained Somali secessionists in Ethiopia.

Eritrea further is actively involved in the fighting in Somalia, supporting one of the many splinter groups there. Eritrea, it has been documented, has trained and armed a militant Somali Islamist group which is blamed for attacks on the Somali transitional government, its Ethiopian allies and Somali civilians.

While itself intervening in Somalia arming extremist groups, Eritrean authorities cast doubt on the motives of several Western powers now getting involved in the fight against Somali piracy and that are sending naval forces to the Horn region. "Some might be motivated by sincere objectives. But for others, the situation provides a silver lining for illegal intervention," the Eritrean Foreign Ministry claims.

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