

United States Imperialist Aims Exposed in Niger

Killing of four soldiers illustrates rising militarism across the continent

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There has been no substantive discussion within the United States corporate and government controlled media as to why Washington is escalating its presence in the West African state of Niger.

News reports about the deaths of four Green Berets are exclusively centered on the notions of a “war on terrorism” which is now reaching the African continent. Subsequently the controversy moved into a series of allegations about what was said during a phone call by President Donald Trump to the family of the African American soldier killed, Sgt. La David Johnson, 25.

White House Chief of Staff General John Kelly defended Trump claiming the head-of-state acted appropriately in his statements to the widow of Johnson. Congresswoman Frederica Smith Wilson of Florida was later insulted by Trump after she accused the president of being insensitive and insincere in his dealings with the family of the slain African American soldier.

Yet the overarching question which was never raised was why should an African American be gunned down in his ancestral homeland conducting military operations for the U.S. government? Also why are African American politicians in Congress not challenging the imperialist militarism of successive administrations in Africa which have been disastrous for both the peoples of the continent and those in the U.S.

This incident occurred amid rising racial tensions within the country where Trump has spoken derogatorily about professional football players who kneel during the national anthem as a protest action against the arbitrary killings of African Americans at the hands of the police and vigilantes. The use of lethal force against oppressed peoples in the U.S. routinely goes unpunished providing incentives from the law-enforcement and judicial systems for a continuation of this same process of racially motivated state-sponsored and condoned violence.

Such a situation now prevailing in the U.S. serves as a moral basis for justifiable non-participation by African Americans and other people of conscience in Pentagon military operations in Africa as well as other geo-political regions. The escalation of military invasions and occupation have only worsened the social conditions facing nationally oppressed communities and working people in general since the beginning of the present century.

The role of Pentagon troops in Niger is part and parcel of the U.S. Africa Command’s (AFRICOM) strategy to dominate the continent on behalf of the financial interests of Wall Street. Formed in early 2008 under the administration of George W. Bush, Jr., AFRICOM was

expanded during the two terms of President Barack Obama.

AFRICOM as its first full-blown operation coordinated the air and ground war against the people of Libya during 2011 where thousands of sorties were flown dropping bombs on infrastructural and residential sites resulting in the deaths and injuries of tens of thousands of people, dislocating millions and creating the most unstable state in the region. The situation in Libya remains mired in humanitarian crises with thousands being trafficked through the country across the Mediterranean on a monthly basis.

In recent days in the aftermath of the deaths of the U.S. soldiers in Niger, the Pentagon has revealed some aspects of its military presence in the country. Although the Trump administration says its main pre-occupation is with curtailing so-called “Islamic terrorism”, these same “extremist” groups have been enhanced, armed, trained and coordinated in Libya, Syria and Yemen along with other countries experiencing similar imperialist-engineered military conflicts.

Framing the Position to the U.S. Public

As far as the official position of the Pentagon is concerned, an article published recently in Bloomberg provides a rationale for the AFRICOM operations in Niger and throughout the West Africa region. Under the guise of spreading “jihadist” violence by a host of organizations that are ostensibly influenced by Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the people in the U.S. are being primed for yet another long term campaign on the African continent.



AFRICOM in the Sahel

The Bloomberg reports says:

“If there is anything to be gained from President Donald Trump’s disgraceful attack on the credibility of the widow of a U.S. Special Forces soldier killed in Niger, it’s that Americans are finally becoming aware of the expanding U.S. mission against extremist violence now spreading across the Sahel region of

Africa. As Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Joseph Dunford explained Monday (Oct. 23), the role of the U.S. military over the last decade has been critical: helping local nations defeat a variety of armed threats. These include affiliates of al-Qaeda and Islamic State, local extremist groups such as Boko Haram, traffickers in migrants and arms, criminal syndicates, and tribal rebels. These groups have different aims but often work together. Their impact extends beyond Africa, to the wars of the Middle East and the immigration politics of Europe. And with the Islamic State nearly wiped out in Iraq and Syria, it will likely shift much of its focus to Africa.” (Oct. 26)

These are the same tired arguments that have been repeatedly utilized since the beginning of the Afghanistan invasion and occupation in 2001. Nonetheless, U.S. and NATO forces remain in the Central Asian state while Trump recently announced that more troops would be deployed.

After 16 years in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the “terrorism” which has been the reason for its existence, remains. Therefore, this purported “war on terrorism” can only be judged as an absolute failure.

This same Bloomberg post goes on to instruct the U.S. Congress on how it should approach this present danger in Africa:

“Congress can do its part by passing a new war authorization to avoid mission creep and give a strong legal basis for counterterrorism operations far away from the original battlefields in Afghanistan and Iraq. Eventually the facts on the ill-fated Niger mission will come out, just as Trump will eventually lose interest in his feud with Sgt. La David Johnson’s widow. Ideally, both the Pentagon and the president will incorporate what they’ve learned into better strategies. But there’s no need to wait to address the danger of increasing extremism in Africa.”

What is most striking about these words is their lack of creativity. U.S. strategic thinking is apparently a “cut and paste” approach where older and discredited postulations related to military policy are periodically recycled.

The Questions of Uranium, French Imperialism and Permanent War

Niger is the world’s fourth largest producer of uranium, a key component in nuclear technology, particularly weaponry. Uranium resources are largely controlled by France which colonized the territory beginning in the late 19th century during the “scramble for Africa.”



Sarraounia Warrior Queen of the Azna People in Niger who fought French Imperialism in the 1890s

French military forces declared a war of conquest against the people of Niger in the late 1890s and were met with fierce resistance by the traditional non-Islamic Azna people of the Hausa who were led by their queen Sarraounia. After retreating into the forests amid heavy weapons bombardment by the French military in its Voulet-Chanoine Mission at the Battle of Lougou Sarraounia and her fighters continued a guerrilla warfare campaign against Paris for many years. The warrior-queen Sarraounia was never captured by the colonizers.

Areva, the French firm which coordinates uranium mining in the country, has a vested interest in maintaining its neo-colonial control over the country. Niger gained its independence in 1960. However, it remained within the political and economic sphere of Paris.

The current leader of Niger, President Mahamadou Issoufou, took power after a protracted political struggle in 2011. He inherited a country devastated by neo-colonial plunder resulting in enormous debt to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other western-based financial institutions.

Niger is heavily reliant upon the assistance of international finance capital. Consequently, the state is prone to economic, political and military interference by both Paris and Washington.

The U.S. is building drone stations in the country while cooperating with France in its military operations. The Economist magazine has described Issoufou as close friend of the West.

Therefore, as is the case in other African states, the continuing dependency on the West is at the source of the contemporary crisis. African states will never enjoy genuine independence and sovereignty until the people take control of the natural resources, land and military apparatus of the government.

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