

US covert operations underway in Somalia; resource conflict escalates over Horn of Africa

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Global Research, May 27, 2006

[Online Journal](#) 27 May 2006

Region: [sub-Saharan Africa](#)
Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

According to a May 16 report in the [Washington Post](#), US analysts of Africa policy and officials of Somalia's interim government say that the Bush administration is secretly supporting secular Somali warlords, whose groups are battling Islamic groups [for control of Mogadishu](#).

While the Bush administration has continued to [dodge questions](#) about what appear to be "classic" covert operations (similar to those taking place in Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Colombia, etc.), Somali government spokesman Abdirahman Dinari has unequivocally declared "the US government funded the warlords in the recent battle in Mogadishu, there is no doubt about that. This cooperation . . . only fuels further civil war."

Somalia is considered a "[terrorist haven](#)," as well as a potential "hotbed of al Qaeda activity." It is no surprise that in recent press conferences, new White House spokesman and propaganda mouthpiece (former Fox News pundit) Tony Snow repeatedly referred to "al Qaeda terrorists."

A senior US intelligence official quoted in the *Washington Post* article (who asked not to be named) says that Somalia presents "a classic 'enemy of our enemy' situation" (but "not an al Qaeda safe haven yet"), while former Clinton administration Africa specialist John Prendergast (now a senior advisor for the [George Soros-funded International Crisis Group](#) think tank) notes that "the US relies on buying intelligence from warlords and other participants in the Somali conflict, and hoping that the strongest of the warlords can snatch a live suspect or two" [for interrogation or rendition-LC]."

Competing Geostrategic and Energy Interests in Somalia

Somalia is of [geostrategic interest to the Bush administration](#), and the focus of operations and policy [since 2001](#). This focus is a continuation of long-term policies of both the Clinton administration and the George H.W. Bush administrations. Somalia's resources have been eyed by Western powers since the days of the British Empire.

According to the US [Energy Information Administration](#), Somalia currently has no proven oil reserves, and only 200 billion cubic feet of proven natural gas reserves, and no hydrocarbon production. But this has not dimmed continuing interest in Somalia's untapped and unexplored potential, and the possibility of an energy bonanza following any resolution of the country's "internal security problems." The Somali regime currently [welcomes oil interests](#). Conoco, Agip, Amoco, Chevron, and Phillips held concessions in the area. Of more immediate logistical and military interest, Somalia is situated on a key corridor between the Middle East and Africa, strategically located on the coast of the Arabian Sea, a short

distance from Yemen.

As laid bare in the January 1993 report by Mark Fineman of the *Los Angeles Times*, "[The Oil Factor in Somalia](#)," US oil companies, including Conoco, Amoco, Chevron and Phillips were positioned to exploit Somalia's rich oil reserves during the reign of pro-US President Mohammed Siad Barre. These companies had secured billion-dollar concessions to explore and drill in large portions of the Somali countryside prior to the coup led by warlord Mohammed Farah Aidid that toppled Barre. The US Somalia envoy at the time was CIA operative Robert Oakley, a chief "counter-terrorism" officer during the George H.W. Bush presidency, and veteran of the Afghanistan and Iran-Contra operations of the 1980s. Conoco's Mogadishu office housed the US embassy and military headquarters.

The infamous Somalia military operation of 1993, popularly depicted in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* series (and subsequent Hollywood film) "[Blackhawk Down](#)," was not a humanitarian mission, but an undeclared UN/US war launched by the George H.W. Bush administration, and inherited by the Clinton presidency. The operation was spearheaded by Deputy National Security Adviser Jonathan Howe (who remained in charge of the UN operation after Clinton took office), and approved by Colin Powell, then head of the Joint Chiefs.

The current Bush administration's escalation in Somalia is a trip "back to the future." As noted by [William Engdahl](#), "Yemen fits nicely as an 'emerging target' with the other target nearby, Somalia," both of which are important geostrategic "choke points":

"Washington's choice of Somalia and Yemen is a matched pair, as a look at a Middle East/Horn of Africa map will confirm. Yemen sits at the oil transit chokepoint of Bab el-Mandap, the narrow point controlling oil flow connecting the Red Sea with the Indian Ocean. Yemen also has oil, although no one yet knows just how much. It could be huge. A US firm, Hunt Oil Co. is pumping 200, 000 barrels a day from there but that is likely only the tip of the find.

"A new US cleansing of Somalian 'tyranny' would open the door for these US oil companies to map and develop the possibly huge oil potential in Somalia. Yemen and Somalia are two flanks of the same geological configuration, which holds large potential petroleum deposits, as well as being the flanks of the oil chokepoint from the Red Sea."

The US, and US-affiliated oil interests, must, at the very least, find ways to head off the aggressive oil and gas-related operations on the part of China and its oil companies throughout the [Horn of Africa](#) region, [Kenya](#), and [Ethiopia](#), and [West Africa](#).

The intense uproar over genocide in Darfur, and shrill calls for military intervention, masks intense geostrategic resource conflict being waged between competing superpowers.

As Engdahl notes, "Sudan, as noted, has become a major oil supplier to China whose national oil company has invested more than \$3 billion since 1999, building oil pipelines from the south to the Red Sea port. The coincidence of this fact with the escalating concern in Washington about genocide and humanitarian disaster in oil-rich Darfur in southern Sudan, is not lost on Beijing. China threatened a UN veto against any intervention against Sudan. The first act of a re-elected [sic] Dick Cheney late last year was to fill his vice presidential jet with UN Security Council members to fly to Nairobi to discuss the humanitarian crisis in Darfur, an eerie reminder of Defense Secretary Cheney's 'humanitarian' concern over Somalia in 1991."

Recently, exploration teams from [Australia](#) have been hunting for oil in Somalia's Puntland. Canadian lawyer Jay Park, "one of the world's top oil and gas lawyers," is working with the Somali government to [create a "credible petroleum regime"](#). According to Park, "(Somalia) is one of the poorest countries in the world, but it may be sitting on some of the greatest oil and gas treasures."

With the world facing Peak Oil and Gas, the world's superpowers are racing to secure every last drop of oil and natural gas from every remaining inch of the planet, with the African continent quickly becoming the stage for new violence and warfare. It is no surprise that Anglo-American oil interests, and the Bush administration's covert operatives, are working Somalia, and the region, for all it is worth.

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