

# US Military Aggression in the Horn of Africa: US Launches Two Airstrikes in Somalia

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## Global Research Editorial Note

The US has initiated a new military aggression against a sovereign country, in defiance of international law, using the threat of “Islamic terrorism” as a pretext. The threat of this illusive outside enemy is fabricated. Washington’s hidden agenda is to create instability in the Horn of Africa, a region rich in oil resources, with a view to eventually justifying military intervention under a bogus UN humanitarian mandate.

Washington’s justification for bombing two sites in Somalia is that members of Al Qaeda were allegedly “fleeing” through Somalia, when we know for a fact that Al Qaeda, which is a creation of the US intelligence apparatus, has consistently, throughout the post-Cold war era been covertly supported by US intelligence and its Pakistani counterpart, the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI). The White House has not confirmed the attack and nobody in Washington is asking questions.

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## US Launches Two Airstrikes in Somalia

By Mohamed Olad Hassan  
The Associated Press

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One or more U.S. military gunships struck at least two sites in Somalia where Islamists were believed to be sheltering suspects in the 1998 bombings of two U.S. Embassies in East Africa and many people were killed, Somali officials and witnesses said Tuesday.

It was the first overt military action by the U.S. in Somalia since the 1990s and the legacy of a botched intervention – known as “Black Hawk Down” – that left 18 U.S. servicemen dead. The U.S. military said Tuesday it had sent an aircraft carrier to join three other U.S. warships conducting anti-terror operations off the Somali coast.

U.S. warships have been seeking to capture al-Qaida members thought to be fleeing Somalia after Ethiopia invaded Dec. 24 in support of the government and officials said U.S. aircraft have begun flying intelligence-gathering missions over Somalia.

The White House would not confirm the attack, nor would the U.S. Defense Department.

But a U.S. government official said at least one AC-130 gunship was used. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because of the operation's sensitivity.

AC-130 gunships are heavily armed aircraft with elaborate sensors that can go after discrete targets day or night. They are operated by the Special Operations Command and have been used heavily against the Taliban in Afghanistan.

The attacks happened about 5 p.m. local time Monday after the terror suspects were spotted hiding on a remote island on the southern tip of Somalia, close to the Kenyan border, Somali officials said. The island and a site 155 miles north were hit.

The main target was Fazul Abdullah Mohammed, who allegedly planned the 1998 attacks on the U.S. Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, which killed 225 people.

He is also suspected of planning the car bombing of a beach resort in Kenya and the near simultaneous attempt to shoot down an Israeli airliner in 2002. Ten Kenyans and three Israelis were killed in the blast at the hotel, 12 miles north of Mombasa. The missiles missed the airliner.

Fazul, 32, joined al-Qaida in Afghanistan and trained there with Osama bin Laden, according to the transcript of an FBI interrogation of a known associate. He came to Kenya in the mid-1990s, married a local woman, became a citizen and started teaching at a religious school near Lamu, just 60 miles south of Ras Kamboni, Somalia, where one of the airstrikes took place Monday.

Largely isolated, the coast north of Lamu is predominantly Muslim and many residents are of Arab descent. Boats from Lamu often visit Somalia and the Persian Gulf, making the Kenya-Somalia border area ideal for him to escape.

President Abdullahi Yusuf told journalists in the capital, Mogadishu, that the U.S. "has a right to bombard terrorist suspects who attacked its embassies." Deputy Prime Minister Hussein Aideed told The Associated Press the U.S. had "our full support for the attacks."

But others in the capital said the attacks would only increase anti-American sentiment in the largely Muslim country.

"U.S. involvement in the fighting in our country is completely wrong," said Sahro Ahmed, a 37-year-old mother of five.

Already, many people in predominantly Muslim Somalia had resented the presence of troops from neighboring Ethiopia, which has a large Christian population and has fought two brutal wars with Somalia, most recently in 1977.

Ethiopia forces had invaded Somalia to prevent an Islamic movement from ousting the weak, internationally recognized government from its lone stronghold in the west of the country. The U.S. and Ethiopia both accuse the Islamic group of harboring extremists, among them al-Qaida suspects.

Ethiopian troops, tanks and warplanes took just 10 days to drive the Islamic group from the capital, Mogadishu, and other key towns.

Ethiopian and Somali troops had over the last days cornered the main Islamic force in Ras Kamboni, a town on Badmadow island, with U.S. warships patrolling off shore and the Kenyan military guarding the border to watch for fleeing militants.

Witnesses said at least four civilians were killed in another attack 30 miles east of Afmadow town, including a small boy. The claims could not be independently verified.

“My 4-year-old boy was killed in the strike,” Mohamed Mahmud Burale told the AP by telephone. “We also heard 14 massive explosions.”

The AC-130 is armed with 40 mm cannon that fire 120 rounds per minute and a 105 mm cannon, normally a field artillery weapon. The gunships were designed primarily for battlefield use to place saturated fire on massed troops.

“We don’t know how many people were killed in the attack but we understand there were a lot of casualties,” government spokesman Abdirahman Dinari said. “Most were Islamic fighters.”

U.S. officials said after the Sept. 11 attacks that extremists with ties to al-Qaida operated a training camp at Ras Kamboni and al-Qaida members are believed to have visited it.

Leaders of the Islamic movement have vowed from their hideouts to launch an Iraq-style guerrilla war in Somalia, and al-Qaida chief Osama bin Laden’s deputy has called on militants to carry out suicide attacks on the Ethiopian troops.

Somalia has not had an effective central government since clan-based warlords toppled dictator Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991 and then turned on each other, sinking the Horn of Africa nation of 7 million people into chaos.

At least 13 attempts at government have failed since then. The current government was established in 2004 with U.N. backing.

*Associated Press writers Mohamed Sheik Nor and Salad Duhul in Mogadishu and Chris Tomlinson in Nairobi, Kenya, contributed to this report.*

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