

US sends ammunition and guns to Somalia

By [Global Research](#)

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THE Obama Administration has provided Somalia's Government with weapons and ammunition "to repel the onslaught of extremist forces" who were "spoiling efforts to bring peace and stability" to the nation, the US State Department says.

A spokesman said the arms were provided in response to an urgent request from Somalian officials.

The move came as Islamist insurgents trying to overthrow the Government cut off the right hands and left feet of four young men accused of theft.

Somalia has been reeling from a pitched battle between the transitional Government and the insurgents, particularly in the capital, Mogadishu, where hundreds have been killed and tens of thousands displaced in recent weeks alone.

The Obama Administration was also stepping up humanitarian aid to the country, said officials, who declined to disclose how much would be spent.

The move was a signal that the US wanted to broaden its commitment to sub-Saharan Africa, going beyond the counter-terrorism programs that were the Bush administration's primary focus, officials said.

The new effort would not involve any US troops, officials said.

US officials hope the aid will lead other countries to make contributions to support the transitional government.

US officials and their allies fear a victory by the Shabab Islamist group and other insurgents would further destabilise the region and make the country a haven for international terrorist groups.

The Shabab, which means "Youth", one of the principal groups fighting to topple the Government, was behind Thursday's amputations. It has imposed harsh sentences in other parts of the country that it controls and, at least once, stoned to death a teenage girl who said she had been raped.

But residents described the amputations as the first in the capital for about 15 years.

Analysts said the Shabab, which is accused of having links to al-Qaeda, might be trying to win popular support by showing that it could achieve stability in the chaotic nation through firm enforcement of Islamic law.

The issue has emerged as a contentious element in the battle for control.

The Government is led by moderate Islamists who have, at least officially, agreed to make Islamic law the basis of Somalia's legal system, a move that could politically isolate the more extreme wing of the insurgency by undermining its claims to legitimacy.

But the Government's enactment of Islamic law seems to have been delayed, in part because it is struggling simply to survive, much less carry out new measures. So it remains unclear exactly how the Government's interpretation of religious law would be practised.

The amputations of the four young men, who had been accused of stealing items such as a mobile phone or a pistol, happened near a former animal market in front of more than 100 people, many of them women and children.

Some shouted "God is great" at the spectacle, witnesses said, while others fell to the ground in shock and fear.

The Shabab said it would care for the men until their wounds had healed.

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