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United States Imperialism in East Africa–Military Interventions and Regional Destabilization

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Secretary of State visits Kenya with initiatives on South Sudan and Somalia

Secretary of State John Kerry landed in Nairobi, Kenya on August 22 for meetings with President Uhuru Kenyatta and foreign ministers from several regional countries in East Africa.

Washington's top envoy focused attention on the fractious political situation in neighboring South Sudan and Somalia.

In the Republic of South Sudan a split between President Salva Kiir and former Vice-President Riek Machar in December 2013 was never fully resolved. The agreement brokered by the regional Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) sought to create a coalition aimed at the re-integration of military forces from the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) headed by Kiir and the SPLM/A in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) led by Machar.



US Secretary of State John Kerry with Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta

The former Vice-President Machar returned to the capital of Juba in April under the presumption that he would be placed back into his position held prior to the December 2013

fighting which took on the dimensions of an ethnic conflict between the Dinka and Nuer groups. The fighting over the last two-and-a-half years has worsened the humanitarian crisis inside South Sudan with reports of atrocities committed by the military forces of both factions and the displacement of two million people impacted by the conflict.

Despite the agreement for a coalition government, clashes erupted during mid-July after which Kiir appointed another Vice-President Taban Deng Gai prompting Machar to flee the capital and the country. Deng, a former negotiator for the SPLM/A-IO, has apparently broken ranks with Machar.

Deng had served as the minister of mines in the government prior to the fracturing of the SPLM. He is the previous governor of Unity state.

In recent weeks, the U.S. sponsored a United Nations Security Council resolution calling for the deployment of an additional 4,000 troops as part of a so-called "protection force." Kerry's visit in part is designed to encourage acceptance of the plan and to create the appearance of concern from the White House which played a pivotal role in the partition of the Republic of Sudan in 2011, once Africa's largest geographic nation-state.

The immediate response from the government in Juba was to reject the UN resolution. At present it appears as if President Kiir is prepared to accept the protection force on the condition that the government in Juba can negotiate the size and terms of the deployment. There are already 12,000 UN troops stationed in South Sudan under the UN Mission (UNMISS) to the oil-rich country.

Machar was reported to have been in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) on August 17 in an area on the border with South Sudan under the care of the government of President Joseph Kabila in Kinshasa. UN forces have been stationed in the DRC for many years in an attempt to maintain some semblance of stability particularly in the Eastern region of the vast Central African state which is the size of all of Western Europe.

Farhan Haq, a UN spokesman, said on August 18 that: « We were aware yesterday of the presence of Riek Machar in DRC. At that point the UN Mission contacted the authorities in the DRC who in turn requested MONUSCO [UN's mission in the DRC] to facilitate his extraction and his transfer to the care of the DRC. We have undergone an extraction operation and so he is currently in the care of the authorities in the DRC. »

Nonetheless, some media accounts have reported that the DRC government was not officially in charge of Machar's security. « They said they are aware that he is in one of the border areas of DRC but they have no official information of Machar being under their care, which is contradictory to the statement of the UN, » according to Al Jazeera's Hiba Morgan, reporting from Juba. (Aug. 18)

A spokesman for Machar reportedly said that he wants to travel to Ethiopia very soon. Additional reports from the SPLA-IO said that there had been an assassination attempt against Machar and he was in need of medical attention.



Abayomi Azikiwe on press TV on Kenya, April 5, 2015

Somalia: The Failure of U.S. Foreign Policy in the Horn of Africa

In addition to the crisis in South Sudan, Kerry was in Nairobi to discuss the ongoing war in Somalia where a U.S. and European Union (EU) supported regime in Mogadishu has not been able to subdue and eradicate the Al-Shabaab Islamic organization which has waged a struggle against the fragile government over the last several years.

At present there are 22,000 African troops from the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) occupying the Horn of Africa state. AMISOM was established in 2007 in the aftermath of the intervention of neighboring Ethiopia in a bid to oust the Union of Islamic Courts (ICU) which had drawn the ire of Washington under the previous administration of President George W. Bush, Jr.

Since 2007, the U.S. has launched numerous bombing operations in Somalia against the Islamists who now are largely represented by Al-Shabaab after an agreement with the leadership of the ICU to join the Somalian Federal government in early 2009. Al-Shabaab is demanding the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the country.

The war has spread into Kenya after Nairobi intervened in the South of Somalia in 2011 at the aegis of the U.S. There have been numerous incursions by Al-Shabaab into Kenya resulting in the deaths of military personnel and civilians.

In recent months several participating states in the AMISOM project have become weary of its viability. A drawing down of forces in Somalia by 2018 has created the potential for an even larger political vacuum in the region.

Abdiwahab Abdisamad Abdisamad, who is described in a Voice of America (VOA) report as a Horn of Africa security analyst, suggested that the restructuring of the Somali National Army is the only way to bring lasting security and stability in the country.

“So many people are asking themselves how 22,000 AMISOM troops, 10,000 Somali troops,

the alpha group unit trained by the U.S. government, plus other Somali regional administrations' troops which total over 100,000 troops," Abdisamad said cannot bring peace and security. "All those forces are struggling to contain 5,000 militants. Therefore, this proves that this project is a failure and it is clear that a reformation of Somali military is better."

Kerry said that the U.S. is allocating an additional "$117 million to support refugees, returnees and drought victims in Somalia. He said another $29 million will be donated to the U.N. refugee agency for the safe and voluntary return of Somali refugees in Kenya, primarily from the sprawling Dadaab camp." (VOA, Aug. 22)

Washington to Maintain Imperialist Posture in the Region

Kerry weighed in on the electoral politics in Kenya commenting on recent dismissals from the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission. Washington did not support the election of President Kenyatta in 2013, backing his rival and former Prime Minister Raila Odinga who is perceived as being more pro-U.S.

"I am pleased to see that progress is being made in reforming the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission and I urge in the most emphatic terms that disagreements about policy and process be resolved through peaceful means," said Kerry. "Kenya has come a long way since the elections of 2007. It is up to leaders on all sides that the violence that took place in the aftermath of that election is never repeated." (VOA, Aug. 22)

U.S. Secretary of State Kerry is also scheduled to visit the West African state of Nigeria as well as Saudi Arabia during his tour. The foreign policy of the Obama administration has fostered greater instability on the continent with the destruction of Libya, the partitioning of Sudan, the expansion of sanctions against Zimbabwe and threats to exclude the Republic of South Africa from the American-sponsored Africa Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA).

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