European Union Training Mission Somalia

PRESS SUMMARY

3rd August 2018

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# SUMMARY

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Al Shabaab kidnap 6-year old girl in Gedo, Somalia

Aug. 02, 2018 - Al shabaab militants on Wednesday abducted a 6-year old girl from her family in Harbole town, Gedo region, Somalia.

The distraught family said the militants came to the house and demanded for the girl. The girl lives with albinism. "The kidnappers stormed into the house in the middle of the night and demanded to be shown where the girl was sleeping. They picked her up from her bed and bundled her into a vehicle," her father Abdiker Weli said. The militants who numbered about five spoke in the Somali language. Weli said they did not steal anything from the house. Besides the murderous atrocities, Al shabaab's mode of operation is synonymous with abductions. Most of the previous abductions were of youthful boys who were forcibly recruited to join the militant group as fighters, and teenage girls and young women who were abducted to be sex slaves to the militants. Area council member Sheikh Mustafa Ali said that this was the first time the kidnappings targeted a child.

Though a new phenomenon in Somalia, abductions and killings of people with albinism in East Africa is not new. People with albinism in the region, especially in Tanzania, have been targeted for ritual killings. A section of people believe that offering some of their body parts brings good fortune. Other communities kill children with albinism in the belief that the condition is a bad omen. "It appears that Al shabaab has delved into the world of witchcraft to protect themselves. What else would explain the kidnapping of this little girl from such a poor family? Sheikh Mustafa posed. "It is no secret that the militants are marred with a lot of challenges now, from a gravely sick leader, to financial issues, defections and worse the constant aerial bombardments by US and KDF Forces," he said. "I would not be surprised if they are seeking help in all forms, including sorcery," Mustafa added. The council member asked all Imams to announce in their respective mosques the disappearance of the girl to assist local police in the search efforts.

https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2018/08/02/al-shabaab-kidnap-6-year-old-girl-in-gedo-somalia_c1796994
Suicide bomber kills 2, injured 4 in Somalia

August 2, 2018

A suicide bomber killing two and injuring four others in a targeted attack on an official in the northern Somali province of Togdher, according to Garowe Online.

The bomber targeted the vehicle of Ahmed Mohamud Dalol, former minister of interior of the state of Khaatumo, who was killed along with Abdifatah Mohamed Ali, an ex-finance head of the defunct Hizbul Islam group, whose members defected to Al-Shabaab in 2013. Ali turned away from religious non-state groups and became an adviser to Omar Abdirashid Ali, the former Somali prime minister, serving the government between 2014 and 2017.

The two were killed just after 7pm Somali local time. Police told Garowe Online that the suicide bomber attempted to stop the vehicle Dalol and Ali were travelling in when they did the bomber “greeted” the two before detonating an improvised explosive suicide belt.

The suicide bomb attack marks a first for the Northern Province, according to Garowe Online. No armed group, including Al-Shabaab, has claimed responsibility for the attack.

The Al-Shabaab group often strikes government targets in densely populated areas across Somalia. The group is battling to topple the central government and impose its rule based on its own strict interpretation of Islamic law. It has killed thousands of Somalis and hundreds of civilians across East Africa in a decade-long insurgency.
Al-Shabaab fighters last week detonated a suicide car bomb before storming a military base in the south of Somalia, killing some 27 soldiers. In retaliation, the United States executed air strikes against Al-Shabaab sites.

The United Nations Security Council voted to delay the reduction of troops in the peacekeeping mission in Somalia. Despite some progress against Al-Shabaab over the years, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres fears much of that is “reversible”.

UK defence minister ‘surprise’ visit

UK Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson paid a surprise visit to the Somali capital Mogadishu yesterday to reaffirm Britain’s support for the war torn country. Discussions reportedly revolved around the African Union Mission in Somalia and the capability of Somali forces to assist with the transition plan for independent governance.

The British government has a special regiment of 85 military personnel stationed to train and work with the African Union Mission in Somalia.

160 Ugandan Police Officers Leave Mogadishu

A contingent of 160 Uganda Police officers will this weekend return from Somalia after completing a year tour of duty in the war torn Horn of Africa country. The team from Uganda’s Formed Police Unit, is part of a multi-national police force under the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which is training and mentoring Somali police officers.

Unlike Uganda People Defence Forces (UPDF) which operates in the interior of Somalia, Uganda police operates in Mogadishu. Specifically, Uganda police is part of the Mogadishu airport security detail. Uganda first deployed officers of the Formed Police Unit in 2012. Since then, they have played a critical role in the Mission’s operations and provided professional support to Somali Police Force.

The outgoing contingent is the sixth deployment. Simon Mulongo, the Deputy AU Special Representative for Somalia lauded the Uganda police team for their contribution towards pacifying Somalia during a medal awards ceremony held in their honour, in the capital Mogadishu on Wednesday.

“Because of your contribution and support to the Somali Police Force, we have been able to have a spell of stability and peace in Mogadishu. Businesses flourish as we speak. Investment is growing at a very fast rate. The flights to Mogadishu have increased. In fact, Mogadishu International Airport is now one of the busiest in the whole of eastern Africa. And this is simply because of your contribution to this kind of environment as the police component,” he said. The AMISOM police Chief Rex Dundun said they are proud of the Uganda Formed Police and grateful for the service they have provided in Somalia. The outgoing contingent which was deployed in Somalia on 4 August 2017, will be replaced by a new police contingent, under the command of Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Richard Onyait.

Grace Turyagumanawe, the Director Peace Support Operations in Uganda Police Force, who is on a working visit to Somalia said during the award ceremony that the returning contingent will be received with honour. “Uganda Police Force receives you with high
salutations for the contributions and well representation you made on behalf of Uganda, to
AMISOM.

This is a Pan-African spirit which should be emulated by all police officers here and at home,” he said. Officers from the Formed Police Unit provide oversight to patrols in the city and the Federal Member States, to ensure maintenance of law and order, train their Somali counterparts and contribute to public order management; participate in cordon and search operations; and provide VIP protection services, among other tasks

Djibouti Slams Call for End to Eritrea Sanctions

August 01, 2018

Djibouti, an increasingly strategic nation in the Horn of Africa, has condemned last week’s call by Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed for the lifting of U.N. sanctions against Eritrea.

During his three-day visit to Eritrea’s capital last week, the Somali president urged an end to the economic sanctions and arms embargo that the U.N. Security Council imposed on Eritrea in 2009 for its alleged support of Islamist militant forces in Somalia.

Mohamed said lifting the sanctions would promote the “economic integration of the Horn of Africa region.”

Mohamed’s statement angered Djibouti, which says Eritrea is occupying the disputed Doumeira islands and is holding more than 10 Djiboutian prisoners.

In an interview with VOA's Somali service, Djibouti’s ambassador to Somalia, Aden Hassan Aden, described the Somali president’s statement as “deeply shocking.”

“As a sovereign state, there is no doubt that Somalia has the right to establish diplomatic relations with the countries in the region. However, it is unacceptable to see our brotherly Somalia supporting Eritrea, which is occupying part of our territory and still denying having Djiboutian prisoners,” Aden said.

Djibouti hosts military bases for five countries: the United States, France, China, Japan and Italy.
The tiny nation is also one of five African countries with troops in AMISOM, the African Union peacekeeping mission in Somalia. The mission has protected Somali governments from attempted takeovers by Islamist militant forces for more than a decade.

“Our boys in uniform who sacrifice their blood and life for peace in Somalia, whose brothers are held prisoners in Asmara, would not be happy to hear such a miscalculated statement from a Somali president,” Aden said.

As part of a flurry of reforms and peacemaking efforts, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed visited Eritrea last month to end a 20-year state of war between the countries.

Last week, Somalia’s president became the second head of state in the region to visit Eritrea.

Aden, the Djiboutian ambassador, said his country welcomed the diplomatic movements and talks in the Horn of Africa. But he emphasized that Djibouti’s conflict with Eritrea was unresolved.

“Our president has no plans to visit Asmara unless Eritrea releases the Djiboutians it detains and withdraws from the territory it occupied,” Aden said.

Somali MP accuses Kenyan troops of rape and extra-judicial killings in Gedo region

August 2, 2018

Abdi Shire (MP) said the Kenyan forces had committed crimes against Somalis without action against them. Photo: courtesy

A lawmaker has accused Kenyan forces in of rape and extra-judicial killings in Gedo region days after local administration pointed fingers at the same forces for killings.

Abdi Shire, a Federal MP said the Kenya Defense Forces (KDF) based near the border town of Belet Hawo raped about five Somali girls. The accusations, the MP said comes barely a week after two Somali men in El-Wak town in the same region were killed by KDF following disputes with the local administration.

“The continuous violation of civil rights and outrageous crimes by the Kenyan forces including the last of which is the gang rape of five girls on July 24, are unacceptable,” he said. The MP called the KDF to limit itself to its patrolling duties and on combat against terrorists.

“We strongly condemn the extra-judicial killing, destruction of properties, the decimation of livestock and other violations the forces continue to perpetrate against civilians in the region,” said Abdi shire. The lawmaker also called on the federal government of Somalia to take urgent action against Kenyan troops in the country.

Somalia Cabinet Holds Weekly Meeting In Garowe

02 August 2018

Somali Cabinet ministers are expected to hold their weekly meeting on Thursday in Garowe town. Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khaire and his Cabinet arrived in Garowe town, the administrative capital of Puntland, as part of the PM’s entourage on his tour of the self declared semi-autonomous state.

According to reliable sources, the meeting is scheduled to take place today. In attendance will be the Federal Government ministers and Puntland state regional ministers. The move comes after hours of speculation that the ministerial meeting had been called off following disagreement between Puntland and Federal Government leaders. Reports now indicate that Federal lawmakers have intervened in the situation and the meeting is expected to proceed.

Militant Groups Look to Exploit Somaliland-Puntland Tensions

August 02, 2018

As fighting and fiery rhetoric increase between the Somali region of Puntland and the self-declared independent state of Somaliland, some analysts fear that Islamist militant groups may try to exploit any instability to plant deeper roots in the area.

“Our concern is that were there to be a direct conflict between Somaliland and Puntland, the security forces will be preoccupied with that, and would not be in a position to contain Al-Shabab or the Islamic State,” says E.J. Hogendoorn, deputy director of the Africa Program at the International Crisis Group.

“Obviously, this will give them the chance to expand their reach,” he told VOA.

Sool and Sanaag

Somaliland and Puntland have had a long-running dispute over the provinces of Sool and Sanaag, which run from the Gulf of Aden all the way to the eastern borders of Ethiopia.

Violence erupted again this January when Somaliland troops attacked and captured the town of Tukaraq, which headquartered a customs station for Puntland.

The Somaliland attack on Tukaraq was carried out while President Mohammed Abdullahi Farmajo of Somalia was visiting Puntland, in what the ICG described as a “warning from Somaliland to the Somali government against getting involved in the contested areas.”

Ali Ibrahim, a development expert working with an International NGO in Somalia, said it is hard to determine the strength of the sides in the disputed region.
“Both sides claim they are stronger, well-armed, and have the necessary skills to defend their ‘land,’” Ibrahim said.

Shabab, IS have toeholds

Although Puntland and Somaliland have enjoyed relative peace and security compared to the rest of Somalia, there are pockets where al-Shabab and the IS faction are present and continue to threaten and attack security forces, mostly in Puntland.

On July 20, al-Shabab seized the small town of Af Urur, 95 kilometers south of the coastal city of Bosaso, in Puntland. The town has been a scene of previous heavy fighting between the terror group and Puntland security forces, including the attack of June 10, 2017, described as the deadliest on security forces since Puntland’s founding in 1998.

“There’s a mountain range that kind of basically spans this region, called the Galgala Mountains, in which there’s been an al-Shabab faction for quite some time,” said the ICG’s Hogendoorn. “As far as we know, they do operate within this region. And, depending on whether you consider it to be Somaliland or Puntland areas, this is an issue.”

The Islamic State in Somalia, which broke away from al-Shabab, is reported to have presence along the coastal region of Puntland.


In May of this year, IS fighters attacked a Puntland army base near the town of Qandala on the Gulf of Aden. They had taken over Qandala twice in 2016 and 2017 before been driven out by Puntland forces.

“These groups [al Shabab and Islamic State] are a threat to peace and stability of Somaliland and Puntland,” said Ibrahim.

“Direct Threat”
The United States has been actively working with the Somali government to try and degrade the terrorist threats from all parts of Somalia.

“These violent extremist organizations pose a direct threat to Americans, our allies, and interests in the region,” Major Wiest told VOA in a written response.

Over the past seven years, the U.S. has carried out many drone strikes against terrorist targets in Somalia, most notably killing al-Shabab emir Ahmed Godane in 2014.

One of those targeted in Puntland last year was IS faction leader Sheikh Abdulkadir Mumin. Although regional leaders told VOA that Mumin escaped alive, several militants were killed.

Over the weekend, a joint delegation of the East African bloc IGAD and the U.N. Mission in Somalia visited both Puntland and Somaliland in an effort to ease the tension around Tukaraq and prevent a full blown war between the two states.

“If that happens, the terror groups will get an upper hand to grow, peace and stability will be compromised [and] political and economic instability [will ensue],” said Ibrahim.

According to Crisis Group’s Hogendoorn, involving the different clans in addressing the threat of jihadi expansion in the area, is a more durable solution..

“What is necessary is for the governments, both federal and state level, to find more of an accommodation with different clans that currently support Al-Shabab and Islamic State,” Hogendoorn said. “And, were these clans to join with the government in opposing Al-Shabab and Islamic State, that will be a much more durable solution...than any kind of foreign military operation.”

Africa: U.S. Plans to Minimize its Military Operation in Africa

The US military is weighing significantly drawing down the number of US Special Operations Forces in Africa despite senior military officials warning that the terrorist threat in Africa is increasing, three defense officials tell CNN. The planned reductions are intended to help better align the US military's posture with the Trump administration's new defense strategy which focuses more on near-peer competitors like Russia and China as opposed to counterterrorism missions.

US Africa Command, which oversees US troops on the continent, has submitted to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff a plan to significantly reduce the number of US forces in Africa, the majority of which work to help countries there battle terrorist groups. It is not clear whether Secretary of Defense James Mattis will approve the proposal. "No decisions or changes have been made yet to the forces operating in Africa," Pentagon spokesperson Maj. Sheryll Klinkel told CNN.

"The Department consistently reviews plans, operations and military investments across the globe to develop the best options that address the constantly evolving threat to US national interests," she added. US Africa Command did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The plan's submission was first reported by The New York Times. Elite American Special Operations Forces currently operate in about 12 African nations, including Somalia, Niger, and Cameroon, where they advise local forces.

"We're going to help them to degrade the enemies that we share in common. They are fighting America's enemies. These are sworn enemies of the United States, that's why we're here. We can fight them here or we can fight them somewhere else at a much higher cost," the commander of US special operations in Africa, Maj. Gen. Marcus Hicks, told CNN in April. Senior US military commanders have warned of the increasing threat of terrorist groups to the region, particularly in West Africa.

"The al Qaeda- and ISIS-inspired threats in Lake Chad Basin and here in the Sahel are very real and continue to grow in strength," Hicks said, referring to two regions in western Africa.
While US troops are primarily in a supporting role, they have encountered combat on multiple occasions.

Four US soldiers were killed in an ambush in Niger last October and another US adviser was killed in Somalia in June. "The threat is increasing at different rates and different volumes depending on where you are at in the theater in Africa," a US military official familiar with US operations in Africa told CNN.

Even before the planned reduction, senior military officials had noted that US troops operating in Africa faced greater resource constraints than in places like Iraq, Syria or Afghanistan. "We're mindful of the limits of our resources," Hicks said in April, saying the then-US military footprint in Africa was "sustainable" over the longer term.

And while the Pentagon is seeking to focus its efforts more on Moscow and Beijing, US officials have expressed concerns about the growing Russian and Chinese presence in Africa.

Russia has sent military assistance to Libya and the Central African Republic, while China has established major economic ties to a multitude of African nations and has built a major military base in Djibouti, close to a US installation.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVp7C3eOm90
Somali expat plans longline venture

August 3, 2018

Somalia has the longest coastline of any country on the continent of Africa, and has abundant tuna and marlin resources. Yet, there are no Somali owners of commercial longline vessels.

Fishing by Somalis is mainly conducted on an artisanal scale, with commercial fishing boats owned and crewed by foreigners. One Somali-American hopes to change that. Abdifatah Gaal came to the U.S.A. while young, attended the University of Washington, and made a career in IT, working for Microsoft and Northrop-Grumman. Now married with six children, he lives in Virginia and works with the Department of Defense.

He plans to invest his life’s savings in a used Japanese longline vessel, have it sailed to Mogadishu, Somalia, and refit it if necessary along the way – perhaps in General Santos, the Philippines; or in Bali, Indonesia. The actual fishing operations would be carried out by his younger brother, who lives in the United Kingdom, and by a cousin living in Mogadishu. He expects to start with a Filipino crew and transition to locals as they are trained.

“I’m taking quite a bit of risk, but my license is ready,” he said. Gall said obtaining his license was facilitated by Somali authorities, who have expressed an eagerness to promote local ownership in the country’s fishing industry. If and when his vessel commences operations, his would be the first real Somali-owned longline vessel in country, though he said that there have been some recent turnkey deals with Turkey and South Africa in which Somali businessmen have invited foreign vessels for a cut. Currently, there are vessels of many nations taking fish in Somalia’s exclusive economic zone – with many not properly licensed or controlled.
Somalia, caught for decades in a state of civil war, has paid little attention to its fisheries until recently. Even now, some fighting continues between government forces and the Islamist group Al-Shabaab. However, with most major fighting stopped, a functioning bureaucracy is beginning to return to the country. However, in the meantime, Somalia’s different autonomous regions, such as Puntland in the north, issued many licenses to foreign vessels as a source of income while exercising no effective control over their activities, so foreign vessels routinely exceeded their permitted catch quantities.

Other vessels, such as those from nearby Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Yemen, just took advantage of the chaotic situation to fish without a license. Anger over illegal fishing – which makes it harder for local fishers to make a living – has been cited as one reason some Somalis turned to piracy. However, recent progress in strengthening the national government, and in enforcement, bodes well for the fishery. The time may be right for Somalis to finally utilize their own marine resources.

Somali political leaders agreed to let the regional administrations issue fishing licenses within 24 nautical miles, and to let the federal government issue fishing licenses beyond 24 nautical miles. Previously, each autonomous region issued licenses, with little coordination. A company from Norway, Trygg Mat Tracking, is providing the Somali government with tracking of vessels suspected of fishing illegally in the Somali exclusive economic zone.

Though the country does not have a sufficient navy to actually stop it, the vessels are identified and a report is made to Interpol to prevent the vessels from coming into any port with their catch, or they may be seized when entering another country’s EEZ. Two vessel were seized in this way in the Maldives in January 2018.

Dirk Zeller, a professor of marine conservation at the University of Western Australia’s School of Biological Sciences said the situation in Somalia is changing. Zeller is also a part of a British Columbia, Canada-based research consortium called Sea Around Us, which has attempted to reconstruct historical fishing data for Somalia in order to make up for the lack of government data.

“Somalia is trying to change and become a responsible international actor, and finally get control and ownership of the marine resources it is entitled to within their own waters,”
Zeller said. “These have until now been plundered and stolen by many other countries illegally and without appropriate and correct compensation, including by European and Asian countries.” For Abdifatah Gaal, who goes by “Abdul” for short, his vessel is only a piece in the puzzle. A lack of cold storage in the country’s ports, and having to create marketing channels from scratch are also obstacles that must be addressed.

Learning the preferences of foreign markets potentially interested in Somali fish is also a challenge for Gaal. For example, Gaal has seen pictures of tuna sold in Japan with head and tail on, and also with head and tail off. He wants to know processing preferences and best procedures. Catching the fish is only the beginning. Another problem is that, though there has long been some artisanal fishing, Somalia is primarily a nation of herdsmen and they lack skills in modern fishing.

“There is no culture for fishing. Camels and goat farming – that’s our culture. We are nation of nomads,” he said. “If you talk to Somalis about fishing, they laugh at you.” But Gaal insists that the opportunity is there. “I heard that a Japanese guy who visited,” he said. “[The man] said, ‘Somalia is the only place in the world where fish die of old age.’”

Meanwhile, Back in Somalia

Aug 01, 2018  Since April, 1992, an international peacekeeping or monitoring force of some type has attempted to reduce the mayhem in war-wracked Somalia. Subtract 1992 from 2018: you get 26 years.

Prepare to add more. This week the UN Security Council voted to maintain the UN and African Union Somali peacekeeping operation (African Union Mission in Somalia, AMISOM) through at least 2020. Troops from Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, Djibouti and Ethiopia man AMISOM and do the brunt of the fighting and security work in southern Somalia. AMISOM soldiers battle Al Shabaab Islamist terrorists, protect the national government in Mogadishu, the capital, and attempt to separate warring Somali clans.

Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti have immediate security interests in Somalia. Al Shabaab has struck Uganda with several terrible terror attacks. It makes sense their troops serve with AMISOM. American special operations forces also conduct raids, drone attacks and surveillance missions against Al Shabaab.

Why are Americans involved? Al Shabaab has ties to al-Qaida and the Islamic State. In 2006, the group managed to seize Mogadishu. 2006 pre-dates the Islamic State but Al Shabaab envisioned establishing a militant terrorist state. To be succinct, Somalia in 2006, like Afghanistan in 2001, was an anarchic nowhere apocalyptic terrorists could use to launch global attacks.

correspondent wrote: "The Somali experience confirmed the spurious nature of American power and that it has not recovered from the Vietnam complex. It fears getting bogged down in a real war that would reveal its psychological collapse at the level of personnel and leader."

Subsequent combat, raids, suffering, death and injury demonstrated al-Qaida's "American collapse" narrative was murderous agit-prop spewed by idiot zealots seeking disciples -- but that also describes a lot of dreadful human history the last hundred years has witnessed. In 1992, Somalia was a failed state, as was Afghanistan. After the Russian withdrawal, it fell to civil war. The Taliban didn't emerge until 1994.

2018's list of failed states includes Somalia and Afghanistan. Congo, the Central African Republic and near-to-Somalia South Sudan are on it. So is Yemen, a short boat ride from Somalia. Syria is a mess, but two major powers are on the ground, the U.S. and Russia. Libya and Venezuela are major messes but they have oil to sell. Haiti is on the list; it is only one hurricane or earthquake from mega-disaster. Are all of these 2018 failed states potential Islamist terrorist bases? With the possible exception of Haiti, the answer is yes. From an American perspective, this argues for continued close intelligence surveillance operations, special operations raids and drone strikes in these chaotic places. In other words, a call for smart guard duty, not peacekeeping missions and nation building.

However, nation "re-organization" might be beneficial, at least in Somalia's case. Julius Caesar said Gaul split into three parts. Somalia has three parts: Somalia (the south), Puntland and the Somaliland Republic. Somaliland occupies northwestern Somalia and in the early 1990s declared independence. It is far more stable than the rest of Somalia. Egyptian Queen Hapshetsut sent an expedition to the Land of Punt in the 15th century B.C. 21st century Puntland is the Horn of Africa's elbow. For several years it was called Pirate Land. It may be time to separate comparatively stable Somaliland from the rest of Somalia's problem. I am not predicting peace. Since January 2018 Somaliland and Puntland have revived a border war. Hey, it's one of Earth's hardest corners.

https://townhall.com/columnists/austinbay/2018/08/01/meanwhile-back-in-somalia-n2505853
NEW YORK (IDN) – Applauding the landmark rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea, ending two decades of hostility, the UN Security Council has called for providing all necessary support to build peace in the Horn of Africa. The appeal came in the briefing on July 30 on the Council’s recent visit to the region by the Sanctions Committee on Eritrea and Somalia, which Ambassador Kairat Umarov, Kazakhstan’s Permanent Representative to the UN headquarters in New York, chairs.

Umarov welcomed the July 9 signing of the Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship by President Isaias Afwerki of Eritrea and Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia, as well as the July 28 visit by Somalia’s President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo to Asmara. In the reporting period, March 14 and July 30, 2018, the Committee also attended meetings in Djibouti, Ethiopia and Somalia, Umarov said.

Noting that the region is committed to ensuring stability and peace, the Kazakh Permanent Representative to the UN said that in his meeting in Addis Ababa, Prime Minister Ahmed had expressed readiness to start a dialogue with Eritrea.

He expressed regret that Eritrea did not invite the Committee nor provide its views on the regional situation, and reiterated the Committee’s commitment to engage with that country. He lamented the lack of response to a letter sent to the Chargé d’Affaires of Eritrea’s Permanent Mission.

The Committee’s visit to the region was a diplomatic and trust-building exercise aimed at engaging directly with authorities to obtain first-hand information, including on the implementation of sanctions on Somalia and Eritrea, he said.

During the discussions, he reminded Somali officials of their obligations under the partial lifting of the arms embargo, noting their concern about the ongoing charcoal ban and Al-
Shabaab’s trade in that resource to finance terrorist activities. The Committee would seriously consider the request to sanction individuals and entities receiving illicit charcoal from Somalia.

On regional dynamics, he said all interlocutors cited the destabilizing effects of the Yemen war on stability, including arms flows and commercial relations, investment, trade and tourism in the Horn of Africa. Regarding sanctions on Somalia, he observed a strong will among authorities, but said the embargo should not be lifted until political and security reforms were established alongside strong institutions.

Presenting several observations on regional challenges, he noted that all interlocutors had described the destabilizing effect of the war in Yemen and warned against a premature withdrawal of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) as Somali forces are not yet ready to take on full security responsibilities.

Celebrate the breakthrough

Ethiopia’s Permanent Representative to the UN, Tekeda Alemu, said much has occurred since the Sanctions Committee Chair’s visit, citing rapid changes reflecting the historic rapprochement between his country and Eritrea. After a 20-year hiatus, Ethiopia and Eritrea have decided to "turn the page" and what was once considered impossible has been made possible thanks to the two countries' leadership.

The silencing of guns in Africa is indeed fostering peace, with "this wind of change" welcomed by the region and beyond. The recent positive momentum must be sustained, Ambassador Alemu said. The Council has a particular responsibility to support the bold steps taken by the President of Ethiopia, he said, emphasizing the need to encourage actions taken "outside the box". Innovative thinking must now acknowledge these positive developments, he added.

The breakthrough of peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea should be celebrated, Alemu said, and highlighted that the current approach hinges on including all parties and excluding no one. Recalling that the Foreign Minister of Djibouti visited Ethiopia the previous week, conducting constructive discussions, he expressed his firm commitment to fostering a good
relationship between Eritrea and Djibouti and pressed the Council to play its important role in that regard moving forward.

Somalia pleads for easing sanctions

Somalia's Permanent Representative Abukar Dahir Osman said sanctions are a tool designed to tackle security challenges, including in the fight against Al-Shabaab and terrorism, which remains a vicious threat. However, Somalia is not what it was when the sanctions were imposed, with significant progress having been made in public financial management, security sector reform, weapons management and accountability.

While there is a long way to go, the Committee and the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea should focus on areas posing the greatest threat to stability. With one of the widest mandates of all the sanctions regimes, it should consider Somalia’s progress, as should the Council, by focusing on spoilers, rather than those engaged in the challenging task of State-building.

Given Somalia's record of compliance with the sanctions regime, he requested the Council to review and update existing measures and underscored a particular need to revise paragraphs 10c and 11a, which allow weapons to flow to Somali security institutions that fall outside the national structure – notably "undefined" Somali security forces and AMISOM strategic partners – without notifying Somali authorities or having proper management processes in place. "This is problematic and it is exacerbating arms fragmentation in our country," Ambassador Osman said.

For its part, the federal Government will continue to implement its transition plan, he added, developing standard operating procedures to achieve a comprehensive weapons management system and establishing a weapons and ammunition management commission. It is committed to ensuring that Somalia's resources are not used to finance Al-Shabaab’s operations. To that end, the National Security Council, in February, endorsed an interim agreement on fisheries revenues, while the Cabinet, in April, agreed to ban the domestic sale of charcoal.

Underlining the importance that precious natural resources are retained to assist in economic regeneration, he said the federal Government is tackling illegal fishing and
ensuring that Somalia's waters and rich fish stocks can provide a livelihood for Somalis. The National Security Council also reached an agreement in June on the ownership, management and sharing of national natural resources.

After decades of war, Somalia's efforts are slowly bearing fruit, he said. But, the country is too often criticized for what it has not yet achieved rather than recognized for its progress. "Our capacity remains at an early stage, but to build it, we require the support and partnership of this Council and its subsidiary bodies," he said.

Eritrea for lifting sanctions

Nebil Said Idris, Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of Eritrea to the UN said that, in recent weeks, historic developments have taken place in the Horn of Africa, with Eritrea and Ethiopia ending two decades of war and opening a new chapter of peace and friendship, as well as a new horizon for sustainable peace and economic integration.

Through a joint declaration, the two countries agreed to exchange ambassadors, forge cooperation in several areas and join hands to address peace and security issues. "The positive externalities of these developments to the entire region cannot be overstated," he said.

Given the emerging regional context, it is inexplicable that the United Nations is discussing sanctions on Eritrea today, he said. The most appropriate action should have been to lift the sanctions, thus unequivocally indicating its support for those positive developments. He welcomed the call by several countries, including Ethiopia and Somalia, for the sanctions to be lifted, calling it unacceptable that some Council members are still setting preconditions and "changing the goalposts". Those countries seek to keep political pressure on the Eritrean people for reasons unrelated to the maintenance of international peace.

"The Security Council should not miss another opportunity to contribute positively to regional peace and security in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea," the Eritrean representative said, emphasizing that the Security Council's credibility in the region is at stake. By lifting sanctions without conditions, the Council can send a positive message that it supports the desire of people in the region to live in peace and economically thrive together.
The other option – for the Council to maintain politically motivated sanctions without justification – would indicate its unwillingness to walk in tandem with regional developments, preferring to encourage spoilers who seek to undermine the unfolding peace and integration. For its part, Eritrea is committed to redoubling its efforts and joining hands with other countries in the region to ensure peace and accelerate socioeconomic progress.

Djibouti wants mediation on border dispute with Eritrea

Djibouti’s Permanent Representative to the UN, Mohamed Siad Doualeh, thanked the Sanctions Committee Chair for his visit to the region, adding that Eritrea’s refusal to invite him, and to cooperate with the Monitoring Group, showed an intolerable pattern of behaviour characterized by obstruction and obfuscation.

Welcoming the latest developments regarding the conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia, he suggested that a study into lost gross domestic product (GDP) due to conflicts in the Horn of Africa would prove the benefits of investing in peace. "Silencing the guns and realizing a conflict-free Africa is a challenging task, but we should all work in earned and full commitment towards that goal," he said, describing the people of the Horn of Africa as brave and talented, with a can-do spirit when given the chance.

On the border dispute between Djibouti and Eritrea, he said his Government agreed with the African Union Assembly decision, adopted on July 2, requesting the African Union Commission to continue helping the two countries to peacefully resolve the conflict, which has been ongoing for 10 years, including six years of fruitless negotiations under Qatar’s auspices.

The Council should urge Eritrea, in accordance with resolution 2384 (2017), to engage in mediation efforts, he said, emphasizing that the opportunity to build a future of peace and development in the region cannot be squandered. There is no escaping the fact that the border remains disputed, that Eritrea is occupying Djibouti’s territory, that prisoners of war remain accounted for, that the threat of force still emanates from Eritrea and that the risk of violent confrontation remains high.

Asserting that Eritrea is defiantly ignoring Council resolutions, he said sanctions for non-compliance must stay in place as long as that country refuses to respect them. On ending
Eritrea's support for armed groups, he said the Council should send a monitoring mission there within one month, which would report back within 30 days of its return.

On prisoners of war, he said the Council could require that Eritrea account for them to the same proposed monitoring mission, with additional access permitted to the International Committee of the Red Cross. He also recommended that the Secretary-General, in collaboration with the Council, convene an urgent meeting of the principal parties to facilitate an agreement based on a mutually acceptable dispute settlement procedure as set out in Article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations.

In such an instance, the Secretary-General would make a recommendation within 120 days and require that the two countries either accept it or submit the dispute to the International Court of Justice for a final binding resolution.

Briefly turning to Somalia, he said Djibouti is heartened by the progress that country is making. AMISOM continues to play a critical enabling role as Somalia strives to gradually assume responsibility for its own security, he said, emphasizing that the Mission deserves ongoing support from the international community. [IDN-InDepthNews – 02 August 2018]

Photo: Ambassador Kairat Umarov, Chair of the Sanctions Committee on Somalia and Eritrea and Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the UN, addresses the Security Council meeting on the situation in Horn of Africa on 30 July 2018. United Nations, New York. Credit: UN Photo/Manuel Elias.

Pirate Attacks on the Rise in 2018

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Armed Somali pirates carrying out preparations to a skiff in Hobyo, northeastern Somalia, on January 4, 2010, ahead of new attacks on ships sailing in the Gulf of Aden. Photo: Mohamed Dahir, AFP

Global maritime piracy may see its first significant increase by the end of this year since the height of the Somali piracy in 2010.

In the first six months of 2018, there have been 107 attempted and actual attacks by pirates globally, up from 87 in the same time span last year, according to a new report from the Interregional Coordination Center International Maritime Bureau.

The increase has been disproportionately located in the Gulf of Guinea on Sub-Saharan Africa’s west coast.

The gulf, which has accounted for over 40 percent of the attacks worldwide so far in 2018, faces unique governmental, geographic and developmental challenges. Nigeria, which makes up a vast majority of the attacks in the Gulf of Guinea, has proven to be especially vulnerable to pirates.

Vessels traveling in Sub-Saharan Africa are particularly susceptible to pirate attacks for many reasons, according to Brandon C. Prins, Professor of Political Science Professor at the University of Tennessee. The long coastline with many inlets that make policing difficult is just one of the many challenges that result in increased piracy.
“Piracy is driven by persistent poverty, corruption, and ineffective governance,” Prins told The Globe Post. “Solutions are difficult because they necessitate significant improvements in the economy and governance, which are challenging and require time.”

Some governments focus on ending illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing to allow local fishers to thrive. This policy encourages locals to take up a sustainable career over becoming a pirate for a living, according to Prins.

“Nigeria is the largest country with the largest population in the Gulf of Guinea and both population size and length of littoral zone associate with piracy,” he said explaining the nation’s unique position. “But Nigeria also has extensive political violence, crime, and corruption, which also fuel contemporary maritime piracy.”

Most piracy occurs in two locations on Nigeria’s coastline according to an IMB map; one is just off the coast of Lagos, the other near the delta of the Niger River.

“Nigeria is not only problematic in terms of attacks at sea,” Dirk Siebels, a maritime security analyst, told The Globe Post. He explained that piracy in the country is “closely linked to the security situation on land and to the lack of effective law enforcement.”

Nigerian poverty fosters an environment of crime. Kidnapping has become a serious problem on land and at sea, with camps and negotiators used by criminals to perpetuate a profitable, sustainable scheme, according to Siebels. On a larger scale, the entire nation’s economy has faced problems from oil theft, as reported by the Nigeria Natural Resource Charter.

Research Fellow in Maritime Security Robert McCabe told The Globe Post that the problems of Nigerian piracy are largely “linked to mismanagement of the nation’s oil reserves and endemic poverty in coastal regions combined with a largely ungoverned maritime domain and an under-resourced maritime enforcement capability.”

“Counter-intuitively, the recent upsurge in attacks in the Gulf of Guinea might actually be the result of more effective counter-piracy measures in certain maritime spaces,” McCabe said. Some measures that lead to decreases in some types of piracy, such as safe anchorages or escort vessels, may cause increases in other types, he explained.
The increase in piracy in the region, which has been a concern for years, prompted a statement from the United Nations in 2016 calling for change in security in the region.

“The Security Council stresses the importance of implementing a comprehensive approach led by States of the region to counter the threat of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea,” the 15-member security council said in a presidential statement, “as well as related criminal activities, to address their underlying causes, and to strengthen both justice systems and judicial cooperation in the region.”

Since the statement, Nigeria has made some changes, but the number of instances of piracy have remained a problem.

In 2017, Nigeria reportedly acquired over 170 assorted boats specifically aimed at ending piracy. It’s not clear how many are active at any one time though, as the measures against piracy are largely reactive, according to McCabe.

“For example, in December 2017 during an operation named ‘Exercise Eagle II’, the Nigerian Navy deployed 13 ships, two helicopters and 80 small patrol boats. So the capacity seems to be there,” he said.

In addition to local forces, there are often international exercises to improve the safety of the region for Nigerian and international trading interests. Shipping and fishing companies are hurt by attacks and theft of their goods, but can do little except lobby the government for increased security. Siebels explained that the government is generally hesitant to bolster a specific force to address piracy, as it is similar to spending money on a police force that is only used to investigate theft and no other crimes, “hardly the most cost-effective way to address the problem.”

This fact, coupled with private armed guards being illegal in the Gulf of Guinea, has lead to further complications of a solution. The enforcement of the laws are “sketchy at best” though, Siebels said. Even so, there are enough restrictions to lead to the rise of indigenous military and police forces leasing their services to protect ships passing through the region.

The solutions to the issue are easily understood, but very difficult to enact because of the unique circumstances of the nations in the Gulf. The experts agreed that reducing poverty
and unemployment is an important step in curtailing piracy, as is strategic enforcement of anti-piracy laws.

McCabe noted that gathering intelligence is an important strategy in combating piracy in the region, but noted that there is reason for hope in reducing piracy around the globe.

“It is somewhat misleading to state ‘global piracy is on the rise,’” he said, explaining that numerous regions have seen large decreases in pirate attacks over ten years or more. The nations in the Gulf of Guinea hope to be the next region to achieve maritime security.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PWgvGjAhvIw