

ERITREA: A look at Ethiopia's latest terrorist attack against Eritrea and its implications

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On 15 March 2012, Shimeles Kemal, the spokesperson for the minority regime in Ethiopia announced to the world that Ethiopian defense forces had violated Eritrea's sovereignty and territorial integrity by attacking "a military post" 16 kilometers inside Eritrean territory. The ignominious spokesperson had the audacity to tell Eritrea "not to retaliate". The minority regime falsely believed that it could continue to commit its crimes against the State of Eritrea and its people and get away with it. It thought wrong. The minority regime bragged about its forays into sovereign Eritrean territories with what seems to be the tacit approval of the United States government according to diplomatic sources in Addis Ababa.

It comes as no surprise. According to the Wikileaks cables, the regime's cadres notified the US Embassy and P-5 Ambassadors before its invasion and occupation of sovereign Eritrean territories in the 1997-2000 border conflict. It also notified the US Embassy and the P-5 as it invaded and occupied Somalia in 2006 and when it decided to renege on Agreements it signed and rejected the Eritrea Ethiopia Boundary Commission's (EEBC) final and binding delimitation and demarcation decisions of 13 April 2002 and November 2007 respectively. It also shared with the US Embassy many other diplomatic, military and political strategies against the State of Eritrea.

That explains, but can never excuse, the silence of the UN Security Council and the US State Department to Ethiopia's recent loud and boisterous announcements of violations against Eritrea's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It also explains why Susan E. Rice, the US Ambassador to the United Nations chose to downplay the violation of international law and the UN Charter as being merely something she read in the news. The good Ambassador forgets that she has greater responsibilities to peace, security and stability in our world, and her personal grievances towards Eritrea should not interfere with her work on the Council. Unfortunately, the record has shown that she is incapable of separating her relationship with the minority regime in Ethiopia from her work as a permanent member of the Security Council.

Meles Zenawi's deceptive tactics for war, and the regime's favorite propaganda gimmicks and ploys have been addressed before. Today, these tired old deceptive stratagems are being employed to once again attack and vilify Eritrea. For brevity's sake, I will list some of the regime's known modus operandi (MO). The minority regime's tactics include:

1. Accusations in a mirror- impute to others exactly what the TPLF regime is planning to do or has done
2. Cry wolf-pretend to be the aggrieved party in order to justify its future acts
3. Media blitz- obfuscation of the facts, misinformation and disinformation
4. Articles/analyses/opinions by "experts", "analysts" etc. to support its actions- this regime relies mostly on Westerners (white) such as Plaut, Gilkes, Pankhurst, Henze and Addis based diplomats.
5. "Welcome" statements -attempt to show popular support
6. Straw man device (Meles Zenawi's favorite)-Equate itself with its western counterparts

Today, we have seen all six transparent tactics in full display.

As I said earlier, the minority regime accuses others in its futile and childish attempts to cover up its own record of bloodshed and destruction, which are well documented by the western press and its handlers. This time the regime was trying to blame Eritrea for the kidnapping and murder of European

tourists in Ethiopia. The Afar Revolutionary Democratic Unity Front (ARDUF) blamed the regime's forces for the killings of the five European tourists from Germany, Hungary and Austria in the Afar region of Ethiopia. The group in its January Communiqué stated the following:

“...On Monday January 16, 2012, our forces killed 16 Ethiopian soldiers and wounded a dozen of them in a battle when the Ethiopian forces opened fire on our patrolling unit near the Arta-Ale Volcano in a place called Xoxom. It was in this battle that the 5 European nationals were killed...We can confirm that European Nationals were absolutely killed by the Ethiopian forces who were accompanying them...”

ARDUF negotiated with the German Embassy in Addis Ababa for the release of the two kidnapped tourists and were released on 6 March 2012. The group vehemently denied any link to Eritrea. For some odd reason, the German government has chosen to remain silent, giving the regime free reign to make unsubstantiated claims against the State of Eritrea. That silence from the otherwise very vocal western press and its handlers has also emboldened the regime to violate Eritrea's sovereignty and territorial integrity with impunity.

The Afar Revolutionary Democratic Unity Front (ARDUF) kidnapped some Europeans and Ethiopians in the Afar region of Ethiopia in 2007. They explained that they had taken the hostages to bring international attention to their cause. According to a 19 March 2007 Wikileaks cable, the tourists were abducted during an “ARDUF raid on an Ethiopian tax office”. Yet the Ethiopian regime's cadres blamed it on Eritrea.

Eritrea has never in its entire history ever resorted to terrorism to advance its political or military agendas. We can't say the same about the regime ruling Ethiopia today. Allow me to refresh the TPLF regime's memory as it seeks to accuse others of what the regime itself has done. Tourist and aid workers were easy preys for the TPLF then, as they are today. These TPLF crimes were recorded as “terrorist” acts by the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT) a non-profit organization funded by the US Department of Homeland Security:

- **Feb. 17, 1988: Members of the Tigray People's Liberation Front abducted six European aid workers. The victims were three Irish nuns, two Belgian doctors and a Dutch nurse. All were released a week later.**
- **Mar. 8, 1986: Two employees of the American relief agency World Vision were shot to death in the dining room of their residence compound in the northern town of Alamata by TPLF rebels. The victims were both Ethiopian nationals. According to western diplomatic sources, the attack marked the beginning of a new guerrilla offensive by the TPLF in northern Ethiopia against the Addis Ababa government (Menghistu Hailemariam Derg regime).**
- **Mar. 8, 1986: Two employees of the American relief agency World Vision were shot to death in the dining room of their residence compound in the northern town of Alamata by TPLF rebels. The victims were both Ethiopian nationals. According to western diplomatic sources, the attack marked the beginning of a new guerrilla offensive by the TPLF in northern Ethiopia against the Addis Ababa government (Menghistu Hailemariam Derg regime).**
- **Mar. 2, 1985: TPLF rebels seized a French disaster-relief aircraft, its five crew members and four**

medical staff members in the northern town of Lalibela. The plane had been flying supplies for Ethiopian villagers as part of the international effort to relieve the disastrous drought and famine. The hostages were freed a few days later.

- **Oct. 17, 1984:** Ten foreigners, including two American tourists, were seized by secessionist TPLF guerrillas in Lalibela. The captured include two Britons, an Australian, a Finn, three West German medics and a Swiss International Red Cross representative. An American tourist couple, a British national and a Swiss citizen were freed on October 30.
- **Etc. etc.**

Because of its past record and its propensity for lies, distortions and exaggerations many analysts, including Ethiopians, suspected the TPLF regime of staging the latest kidnappings to divert international attention from its desperate domestic problems. As it turned out, they were right; it had everything to do with the regime's disastrous and criminal domestic conduct.

In addition to its latest military provocation the minority regime has committed terrorist acts against Eritrea by creating, financing, harboring and supporting anti-Eritrea elements. A 2008 analysis/study provided by Professor Gérard Prunier for the Center for International Peace Operations, Berlin/Germany provides an interesting insight in to the minority regime's activities against the State of Eritrea. According to Prunier:

“...the Ethiopians have managed to create a kind of “federation” (National Alliance of Eritrean Forces or NAEF) composed of about fourteen different opposition movements which include the Eritrean Islamic Reform Movement (EIRM) and the Eritrea Democratic Alliance (EDA). But this “federation” is of extremely dubious efficiency which is why the Ethiopians have created on the side another organization, the Eritrean Revolutionary Democratic Front (ERDF) which is in fact a big sounding name for a kind of fighting commando...”

Prunier gives further detail about the two organizations and their differences. He writes:

“...NAEF can be considered as a political movement while ERDF is a military one. NAEF is kind of “official” and its leaders are known. But they have no fighting strength. The ERDF is the opposite: it is an almost secret organization with no known leaders and it is more an Eritrean Foreign Legion of the Ethiopian Army than a real political movement. It is just supposed to give a kind of “political local cover” for the Ethiopians the day they would have to fight Eritrea, more or less the way Kabila’s Allied Democratic Forces for a Liberation of Kongo-Zaire (ADFL) gave a local Congolese cover to the Rwandese Army in 1996...”

Suffice it to mention some of the military adventures of the minority regime through its surrogates in the ERDF:

- **“...Ethiopia has hosted meetings of various factions of the Eritrean Liberation Front, trying to bring the ELF-Revolutionary Council and the ELF of Abdullah Idris together. It has offered support to three small Eritrean Marxist opposition parties, and to an opposition Kunama party, and has recently set up an Afar Red Sea Democratic Organisation to try and build up Afar resistance to the Eritrean government...”-(Patrick Gilkes, BBC News 2 March 1999)**

- **“...Ethiopia has given support to the opposition Alliance of Eritrean National Forces (AENF), now based in Ethiopia. It anticipates that this will be able to mobilise former Eritrean Liberation Front supporters, and Muslim critics of the present government...”- (Patrick Gilkes, BBC News 19 May 2000)**
- **In May 2003, Herui Tedla and the Eritrean National Alliance were brought to Ethiopia and provided with “material support” to set up a military wing to attack strategic targets such as television and radio centres. (BBC 2 May 2003)**
- **In 2003, British geologist Timothy Nutt was slain as he worked in Eritrea, by the Eritrean Islamic Jihad, one of the groups financed, harbored and supported by the regime in Ethiopia.**
- **Groups financed, harbored and supported by Ethiopia detonated a bomb in Barentu, Eritrea during the 2004 Independence Day celebrations killing 5 people and wounding 88.**
- **“...Eritrean Democratic Alliance launched a six-day congress here on Thursday...EDA is Eritrea's opposition umbrella embracing 13 sisterly political organizations...”- (15 February 2007 Ethiopian News Agency)**
- **“...An Eritrean opposition group told AFP on Tuesday it was "prepared to launch attacks" on government troops after the United Nations last week imposed tough sanctions on Asmara..."This is a good opportunity for us," Cornelios Osman, head of the Democratic Movement for the Liberation of the Eritrean Kunama (DMLEK) said in a phone interview..."We are preparing our military forces to launch more attacks"... DMLEK is a member of the Ethiopia based coalition Eritrean Democratic Alliance...” -(AFP 29 December 2009)**

On 1 January 2010, there was another armed attack on Eritrea emanating from Ethiopia. The regime denied any responsibility and made public statements to that effect. Despite Ethiopia’s public denials, a 12 January 2010 cable, “Ethiopia Denies Involvement In Skirmish On Eritrea Border”^[1] reports on what the regime’s cadres were saying in private. According to the cable:

“...Privately, the GoE has been more candid about the likely source of the attacks. On January 8, Tesfaye Yilma, Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Director General for Europe and the Americas, suggested to A/DCM that the two Eritrean opposition groups that claimed responsibility for attacking Eritrean military installations and killing 25 Eritrean troops, the Red Sea Afar Democratic Organization (RSADO) and the Eritrean National Salvation Front (ENSF), had probably done so...”

The Cable goes on to state the following:

“...In a January 8 meeting with A/DCM, opposition Oromo People's Congress (OPC) and Forum leader Merera Gudina offered two possible explanations for the incident: 1) The GoE ordered Ethiopian National Defense Forces to attack Eritrea to test the international community's reaction in light of recent sanctions; or 2) Eritrean opposition groups operating out of Ethiopia and funded by the GoE carried out the attacks with GoE approval...”

Today, the regime has once again attacked Eritrea using the same pretext it used when it ignited the 1998-2000 Eritrea Ethiopia border conflict by infringing on Eritrea’s sovereignty and territorial integrity,

supposedly in its chase of Afar rebels. T

he regime's latest political blunder stem from its desperate attempts to divert the Ethiopia people's attention from the domestic crimes it has committed against them, and to extricate itself from the self created political quagmire. It is also a futile attempt to absolve itself of responsibility for the murder of the European tourists killed during its battle with Afar rebels. After all, there are two living witnesses to the incident. Their silence says a lot about the regime's culpability.

Speaking of silence, the US State Department in its subdued statement following Ethiopia's attacks on Eritrea said that it was waiting to see what "Ethiopia's intentions" were. Ethiopia's intentions are not lost on anyone, least of all the US State Department.

Ethiopia's intentions have been spelled out clearly by David Shinn, former US Ambassador to Ethiopia and an avid supporter of the minority regime there. Here is what the Voice of America reported on 19 March 2012:

"...On the other side of the fence, one should point out that Ethiopia also has a record of being supportive of Eritreans who oppose the regime in Asmara...Shinn notes that Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi stated in parliament last April that his government would actively support groups trying to overthrow Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki...David Shinn recalls a similar cross-border incursion when he was U.S. envoy to Ethiopia in 1997. He says that incident was among those cited by Eritrea the following year when war broke out..."

If David Shinn knows, the US State Department also knows. Judging from the Wikileaks documents, the regime in Ethiopia has coordinated all its activities with the US Embassy in Addis and I bet, they were notified of its intentions long before the public announcement.

In 2010, I asked Matt Bryden of the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea why the SEMG failed to include the numerous terrorist and destabilizing acts committed by the minority regime in Ethiopia, acts that have been well documented in the media and at the UN, in its report. His response was interesting. He said that it was Eritrea that was under UN sanctions and that whatever Ethiopia did was neither here nor there. It is the same excuse used by the media today to explain the conspicuous silence of the US led international community as Eritrea, a member state of the United Nations, is attacked in broad daylight.

Eritrea's inherent right to self defense is justified under international law and Article 51 of the UN Charter. For the 3 reasons mentioned below and more, Eritrea has the right to liberate her sovereign territories and will not seek permission or approval from those who refuse to fulfill their legal and moral obligations.

-There is an armed attack/occupation. Ethiopia's army, by its own 15 March 2012 public admission has once again violated Eritrea's sovereignty. It also continues to militarily occupy sovereign Eritrean territories, including Badme, since April 2002 when the Eritrea Ethiopia Boundary Commission delivered its final and binding decision.

- There is no practicable alternative or it is demonstrably unavailable. The authority, the UN Security Council, which has the legal powers to stop or prevent the infringement, has so far refused to take any deterrent actions against the minority regime. Meles Zenawi has been emboldened by the diplomatic,

financial, military and political shield and support it receives from the United States and others.

-There is urgent necessity. Ethiopia's belligerence and lawlessness have increased in the last 10 years and with it the appeasement and cuddling of the regime by its western handlers against the wishes and aspiration of the Ethiopian people and in violation of the people of Eritrea's right to live in peace within their internationally recognized borders.

In addition to its invasion and occupation of sovereign territories in neighboring states, the regime has committed genocides in the Gambela, Ogaden and Oromia regions of Ethiopia, instigated ethnic and religious conflicts all over Ethiopia, imprisoned and massacred opposition members on trumped up charges of "terrorism", and sentenced Ethiopian-Americans in absentia for opposing the regime and supporting the struggling people of Ethiopia, and has "hunted down" opposition groups who have taken refuge in neighboring countries (OLF and ONLF in Somalia and Kenya). The regime wrongly believes its reign will be indefinitely secured by Washington and its allies....it figured wrong.

Washington's biased and dangerous policies for the Horn of Africa and its appeasement of the minority regime in Ethiopia has undermined its role as a neutral peace broker and has lost all credibility and integrity amongst the people of the region in general and the Ethiopian people in particular. Appeasing the reckless minority regime in Ethiopia will further destabilize the already volatile Horn region and Washington and the UN will be held accountable for the carnage that is sure to ensue.

It is high time the Security Council annulled and repealed the unjust and illegal sanctions imposed against the State of Eritrea.

The rule of law must prevail over the law of the jungle!

^[1] <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2010/01/10ADDISABABA50.html#>