



By Andrew Franklin



Another Beginning?

In May 2017, delegations from a wide and diverse array of international stakeholders with interests in Somalia gathered in London to attend a high-level multilateral conference, the third major conference to be held on Somalia since 2012. Hosted by the British Government in conjunction with the United Nations Secretary-General, more than forty organisations and nations ultimately met to outline the relationship between the international community and the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) over the next four years.

To this end, the conference participants unveiled a New Partnership for Somalia (NPS) and a Security Pact (SP) whose objectives -the continuing pursuit of a stable and secure Somalia- did not really differ from the outcomes of the two previous high-level conferences. Indeed, they were very much in accordance with all such gatherings held since the overthrow of Siad Barre in 1991. From the points of view of the conference organisers, international and local media and the newly elected FGS President Mohamed Abdullahi “Farmajo” Mohamed, the conference was deemed a success, attracting as it did pledges of additional financial assistance, training and material support, as well as deadlines for achieving the full realisation of national security architecture within a federalised governance structure.

For Kenyans, however, news coming out of the actual conference, as well as in the days preceding and after the event, was much less positive and considerably more ominous. The Head of State, President Uhuru Kenyatta, facing a tough campaign for re-election in August 2017, seemed to

commit the Kenya Defence Force (KDF) to remaining in Somalia until the objectives of Operation Linda Nchi, the invasion of Somalia launched in October 2011, and which had since been folded into the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), had been achieved. Mr. Kenyatta was quoted as saying that “Our ultimate objective is to ensure the country’s (i.e. Somalia’s?) security is guaranteed. We cannot exit without accomplishing our goal of bringing stability and have a secure nation.” President Kenyatta was reported as asking the international community to significantly enhance its support to AMISOM; alternatively it was suggested that the UN take on much more of the funding responsibility for AMISOM. It was unclear whether KDF assigned to AMISOM would be withdrawn along with other troop- contributing nations’ military and police units as of 2020, as previously announced by the African Union; President Kenyatta was reported as stating that greater UN support would accelerate the planned draw down of AMISOM soldiers.

Back home neither the Kenyan media nor any of the opposition leaders took much notice of the president’s declarations that the KDF would stay in Somalia to pacify and stabilise Somalia; editors were happy to express patriotic sentiments supporting continued KDF presence because, as the *Sunday Standard* stated, “Al Shabaab strikes when we relax and retreats when we advance, the idea being to wear down the KDF to desperation and withdrawal. This is why President Uhuru Kenyatta has made it clear that the army is in Somalia for the long haul. Withdrawal would mean loss of national face and a propaganda coup for the Al Shabaab.” And that was that as everyone turned all their attention to politics and the price of ugali.

Operation Linda Nchi

On Sunday, 16 October 2011, a column of approximately 1,800 Kenya Army troops crossed into Somalia from their bases in Mandera, Wajir and Garissa. Although supported – when weather permitted – by helicopter gunships and Kenya Air Force F-5s, this was essentially a conventional motorised assault against Al Shabaab terrorists. During the five weeks prior to the cross-border assault, suspected Al Shabaab militants had allegedly attacked Western tourists in Lamu and had also abducted two Spanish Médecins Sans Frontières volunteers from the vicinity of the Dadaab refugee camps. Throughout 2011, there had also been an upsurge in-fighting inside Somalia between AMISOM, Somali government forces and the Al Qaeda affiliated Al Shabaab militia. The latter had been pushed out of the Somali capital, Mogadishu, and was relinquishing control over towns in central Somalia where much of the population was experiencing serious famine. Further south, Al Shabaab had retained control of Kismayu with its strategic functioning port facilities and, in the areas adjacent to the Kenya border, held increasing sway over the population.

Although I initially viewed Operation Linda Nchi as a legally permissible punitive strike against Al Shabaab’s cross-border incursions, the longevity and development of the operation, as well as evidence that Al Shabaab terrorists were not involved in attacks on tourists in Lamu or in the kidnapping of the two Spanish MSF employees in Dadaab, caused my views to shift to more prosaic and indefensible reasons.

This cross-border incursion had limited objectives and the columns’ various combat elements – armoured fighting vehicles, towed artillery, troop transports, donated American Humvees, lorries, British supplied tanks, Land Rovers – were not accompanied by ambulances, fuel trucks, combat support engineers, water bowsers, mobile kitchens, specialised command-and-control armour-proofed vehicles or heavier artillery pieces. The numbers of troops initially committed and the configuration of the attack column gave no indication that the KDF had planned a campaign to last beyond Christmas 2011.

The very limited objectives of Operation Linda Nchi included recovery of those kidnapped ostensibly by Al Shabaab terrorists, pushing the group's units away from the international border and retaliating for previous terrorist attacks against targets within Kenya, however infrequent and sporadic they may have been; in fact Kenya had largely escaped the sort of Al Shabaab terrorism unleashed against civilians in Uganda in 2010, which had troops actively engaged in combat with Al Shabaab on behalf of the Mogadishu authorities.

Within two weeks of the Kenyan troops crossing into Somalia, Al Shabaab launched a still ongoing, albeit intermittent, campaign of terrorist attacks on mainly civilian targets in and around Nairobi and Mombasa, as well as throughout the counties of the former North Eastern, Eastern and Coast Provinces. Al Shabaab also increased recruitment within Kenya and a local branch developed, seemingly focused on exploiting domestic alienation and historical anti-government grievances among Muslim communities who viewed themselves as being largely marginalised and discriminated against by successive post-independence governments. Attacks against soft targets inside Kenya have waxed and waned. Though Nairobi has been spared similar attacks to that on the Westgate Mall in 2013, which killed at least 68 people, Al Shabaab has since 2012 massacred students, civil servants and workers across Mandera, Wajir, Garissa and Lamu counties. Continuing assassinations of chiefs and subchiefs, as well as occasional successful attacks on isolated police posts and ambushes within Kenya of KDF convoys and police patrols, are clear evidence that Al Shabaab's somewhat minimal presence in 2010 inside the four counties bordering Somalia has developed into a self-sustaining domestic insurgency.

The situation in Mombasa has also become increasingly confused since 2011, mainly because of heavy-handed government repression and extrajudicial executions targeting radical Imams and alleged Jihadist recruits, apparently with the tacit support of foreign intelligence agencies.

Operation Linda Nchi - A Confluence of Interests?

During the thirty-six years since I first arrived in Kenya, the security relationship between Washington and Nairobi has undergone substantial changes in scope, in activities undertaken and in financial support given, as well as in the expectations and motivations of all participants and stakeholders. Between independence in 1963 and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Kenya had been a reliable, albeit not terribly strategically important, ally of the West against the spread of communism, whether in East Africa or throughout the Greater Horn of Africa region. All Kenya had the port of Mombasa and its relatively stable and peaceful political environment in which a host of service industries (i.e. finances, logistics, education, communications, light manufacturing built on import substitution, and export-oriented agricultural enterprises) seemed to operate reliably and efficiently, especially when compared to the rest of the region. Kenya had also attracted the only UN Headquarters located in Africa, numerous foreign correspondents and both major and minor international media institutions. During the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, international NGOs and development agencies established regional offices and substantially increased the inflow of donor dollars, whether for project support or simply to conduct daily operations. The country also experienced a genuine tourism boom which benefited from - by African standards - her superior infrastructure (i.e. all-weather roads, international and domestic air connections, seaport, etc.) and a well-developed hospitality industry. Despite her one-party government, price and exchange controls, and a growing movement advocating greater democracy, increased economic opportunities and an end to rising levels of government corruption, Kenya was a haven of stability and pragmatic African nationalism.

None of the foregoing should be dismissed as a somewhat irrelevant backstory. The same factors that made Kenya a moderately useful ally during the Cold War can still be found today. Kenya remains an essential hub for major humanitarian and relief operations in the Horn of Africa, South

Sudan, the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Burundi, and is a vital component in international antipiracy operations. She has become increasingly important to the conduct of US counterterrorism operations focusing on the Al Qaeda leadership co-located with Al Shabaab elements within Somalia and elsewhere in the region.

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The launch of Operation Linda Nchi substantially altered the relationship between the Kenyan and US governments.

Just as Operation Linda Nchi effectively constituted a "declaration of war" on Al Shabaab and other radical Islamic terrorists - and changed Kenya forever - the successful Al Qaeda attacks in September, 2001, on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon transformed how the US government perceived global threats to homeland security; much of the language used to describe the global danger to America of radical Islamic Jihadist terrorism is eerily reminiscent of the views of threats posed by international communism in the aftermath of the Second World War. The "enemy" then was exemplified by the Soviet Union and mainland China, as well as such bit players as Cuba, Vietnam (North until 1975) and North Korea. Because all of these enemies were essentially state actors, American responses could be characterised as merely adaptations of traditional statecraft (e.g. diplomatic, political, military, economic, etc) somewhat modified to fit post-war United Nations conventions.

Since 9/11 traditional statecraft, whether modified or adapted, has been pretty much thrown out the window, the "enemy" in our Global War on Terror seems mainly comprised of non-state actors fighting to impose their ideology of radical Islam wherever an opportunity arises. Although violent Jihadists may be sponsored or supported by established nations and may even seek to overthrow existing governments (e.g. Mali, Somalia, Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, Afghanistan), the received wisdom and emerging doctrine within ascendant Western security establishments views the current conflict as being both global and forever. This has led to new ways of assessing "victories" and conducting operations whose effect on US-Kenya bilateral relations may not be obvious but is nonetheless pervasive and with consequences that are unintended and little commented on.

Despite occasional statements paying lip service to promoting good governance, countering insurgency (i.e. hearts and minds activities, developing partners' security capacities, etc.) and promoting a human rights agenda, short-term success is measured by the elimination of "wanted" Al Qaeda/Al Shabaab terrorists with little or no loss of American lives; financial considerations are secondary. In addition, since the invasion of Iraq in 2003 "nation building", as a modern term for either small wars or counter insurgency campaigning, has fallen completely off the charts used by American and nearly all Western leaders. For example, in Somalia the US is following a policy of stabilisation which is inherently short term in nature and which has no overall strategic objectives.

In this scenario, Kenya, as a stable geographical entity with a friendly government, has assumed much greater importance than at any time in its nearly 40 years of military cooperation with Washington. In fact the nature of America's "Forever War" since 9/11 gives the Kenyan government much greater influence in its relationship with Washington than was ever the case even at the height of the Cold War when American efforts in Africa concentrated on suppressing threats posed by the

Soviet Union, Cuba or East Germany and such proxies as Libya and Ethiopia.

Another thing that is seldom appreciated is how many “survivors of terrorism” are driving America’s post 9/11 security agenda. For example, the present US Ambassador to Kenya, Robert Godec, survived the Al Qaeda bombing of the US embassy in Nairobi on 7 August 1998 and his career assignments since then have involved various aspects of the US government’s Global War on Terrorism. His immediate predecessor, Scott Gration, was on duty at the Pentagon on 9/11 when hijacked aircraft slammed into the building; he was also a senior officer who witnessed the terror bombing in the early 1990s of the Khobar Barracks used by US Air Force personnel in Saudi Arabia.

Further, I believe an appreciation of the connections and links between the individuals running the US security agenda in the Horn are critical to any assessment of the US government’s assistance to Kenyan security agencies. When Operation Linda Nchi was launched, Ambassador Scott Gration, a retired Major General in the US Air Force, was the US Ambassador to Kenya; he had previously served as the Obama administration’s representative in Juba, South Sudan. Ambassador Gration had grown up in Kenya and, as a US Air Force Major, had from 1983 to 1984, worked closely with Julius Karangi, then a Kenya Air Force Major, when the US government supplied Kenya with F-5 jets and instructors. Major Karangi, who was then in charge of US-Kenya military assistance programs, had risen to the Chief of Defence Forces when Operation Linda Nchi was launched.

US training and logistics assistance to Kenya increased substantially during 2012, although Gration resigned on 21 June 2012. Gration remains active in business and missionary circles in Kenya. General Karangi retired from KDF in 2015 but remains highly influential inside the government and its security architecture, as well as in business circles.

The political class in Kenya is oblivious of the existential security threats confronting Kenya; there is an ingrained belief in the nation’s exceptionalism and resilience based on little more than hope and an unwillingness by the media, government, civil society and the private sector to demand accountability from their friends, relatives and colleagues occupying senior positions of power, influence and responsibility when things go wrong.

Although Scott Gration served as Senator Obama’s military aide during the latter’s visit to Nairobi in 2006 and was one of the first generals to support Obama for president in 2008, he has close ties to Dr. Jendayi Frazer, a former Republican Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs serving through January 2009; Dr. Frazer has been associated since 1990 with the Kenyatta family and does business in East Africa – especially in Rwanda – and is a strong proponent of fighting Islamic Jihadist terrorism, especially in East Africa. During her tenure as Assistant Secretary of State, the Kenyan government allowed the recruitment of ethnic Somali Kenya citizens and Somali refugees from Dadaab who were trained in Manyani by retired US personnel and serving Kenya Army officers and then sent in Somalia National Army uniforms to fight Al Shabaab; this project was eventually abandoned and by August 2011 some wounded survivors made their way to Mandera. This entire operation remains shrouded in secrecy but seems to have fallen apart when funds for salaries and logistics were stolen, with the fighters in Somalia being literally abandoned and left to their own devices; an unknown number of these trained soldiers were alleged to have defected to Al Shabaab. The financing of these sorts of shadowy military operations, which date back in concept to the late 1940s, has always been “off the books” and not subject to normal financial and performance audits.

While researching KDF “Order of Battle” reports compiled by various professional risk analysts, I noticed that there are 100-110 T-72 Main Battle Tanks (MBTs) still listed in Kenya Army inventories; the KDF has never purchased or deployed the Soviet era tanks although the Sudan People’s

Liberation Army (SPLA) Juba government took possession of such equipment when Scott Gration was the US government representative. Somali pirates had inadvertently captured a vessel carrying 33 T-72s, which was rapidly freed and made its way to Kenya where its cargo was offloaded in Mombasa from where the tanks, ammunition, spare parts and accessories were transported by rail and road to South Sudan; the Kenyan military would have been the only Kenyan government agency with the necessary means and capabilities to ensure safety and security of this and previous transfers of heavy war materials and weapons to the SPLA in Juba even before South Sudan formally achieved independence. (Whether the Auditor General has ever queried how over a hundred MBTs were added to the KDF assets register and whether this procurement, including payment to the supplier, was properly documented remains unknown.)

The launch of Operation Linda Nchi substantially altered the relationship between the Kenyan and US governments. Washington had not been formally advised about the incursion and the seemingly open-ended nature of this punitive expedition -which had failed by Jamhuri Day, 2011, to accomplish any of its limited objectives- presented the Obama administration with an unforeseen dilemma as it opened up another front in the US Global War on Terrorism. Kenya increased its forces inside Somalia to 4, 660 and announced that the main objective of the campaign was to seize the port of Kismayu after clearing Al Shabaab forces from an expansive zone -Gedo/Juba - adjacent to the international border. In addition, the government negotiated the permanent inclusion of some 3,600 KDF troops into AMISOM; this “rehatting” was essential if Kenya were not to be bankrupted by its invasion of Somalia.

An additional consequence of Operation Linda Nchi was a nearly immediate upsurge in Al Shabaab terrorism, not only in the four frontline counties along the Somali border but increasingly directed against civilian targets in and around Nairobi as well as in Mombasa. the Kenyan security forces’ weaknesses and vulnerabilities became obvious, which prompted more financial assistance from the United States and its Western allies to Counter Violent Extremism/Counter Jihadist Terrorism.

Similarly, well-documented governance issues and failures of the Kenyan government to manage basic administrative functions normally associated with a modern nation state - and essential for any success to be achieved in countering insurgency or fighting terrorism - have merely attracted more money for more quick fixes, community-based development solutions as well as increased joint training opportunities for selected KDF elements and, occasionally, counterparts from the United States (e.g. Massachusetts Air National Guard - September 2016). There are also ongoing deployments of US Special Forces personnel to “train, advise and assist” their KDF Special Forces counterparts; the only time such activities come to light is when a US service member dies while temporarily deployed to Kenya and a notice briefly appears in some home town media outlet. Correspondent Margot Kiser has also reported in the *Daily Beast* about US soldiers in the Boni Forest / Lamu area.

On the Kenyan side of the bilateral relationship, there is a permanent, long-standing community of diverse political, social, economic and commercial interests, all of which derive benefits from continuing participation of the Kenyan government in America’s Forever War as it plays out in the Greater Horn of Africa. As will be explained in greater detail, regardless of the initial factors that motivated Operation Linda Nchi, there is no longer any reason to believe that the Kenyan government’s actions since 2011 have anything to do with strengthening Kenya’s national security within the context of the 2010 Constitution and in accordance with legitimate and acceptable national interests. The political class in Kenya is oblivious of the existential security threats confronting Kenya; there is an ingrained belief in the nation’s exceptionalism and resilience based on little more than hope and an unwillingness by the media, government, civil society and the private sector to demand accountability from their friends, relatives and colleagues occupying senior positions of power, influence and responsibility when things go wrong.

In 2014, I wrote about how Kenya had become a nation of “spin” and PR:

“... Kenya has developed into a nation where shameless deception and lying have become standard operating procedure in both public and private sectors; the effects of this Orwellian dystopia we have learned to accept initially means that we fail to identify and fix problems and ultimately suffer increasingly greater financial losses... our economy fails to grow and .. youth radicalization, crime and insecurity increase nationally.”

Although I was referring to the reporting in the media of bank failures, financial fraud and regulatory incompetence, it is true that the spinning of reality and PR whitewashes have replaced news reporting and analyses of all matters security.

With hindsight, Operation Linda Nchi was launched to put Kenya firmly on the side of the US and other western allies in the Global War on Terrorism but with little thought given to the country’s national security needs, capacities and capabilities.

Further, Kenya’s failure to implement anti-money laundering policies and procedures has gone well beyond inhibiting economic growth and facilitating corruption. “Kenya on US blacklist over terrorism laws,” the *Daily Nation* reported in March 2012. The country had been found to not be lax in enactment of legislation criminalising the financing of terrorism. Nearly eight months later, Kenya remained on watch lists of countries failing to make sufficient progress to curb money laundering and to counter terrorist financing.

An example of how half full - even nearly empty - water glasses can be described as opportunities to turn lemons into lemonade can be found in an article in the *Standard on Sunday* by Prof. Peter Kagwanja. In the piece, titled “Latest move by USAID a warning to end dependence on aid”, he characterised the recent US suspension of \$21 million earmarked for the Ministry of Health (after the Auditor-General found that billions of shillings in the ministry could not be accounted for) as being done on political grounds, ostensibly because corruption is a major campaign plank of the opposition; the suspension, he argued, presented an opportunity for Kenya to wean itself off aid.

However, Prof. Kagwanja finishes up by mentioning the US government’s commitment to spend \$30 million on the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), implying that such spending constitutes approval rather than acquiescence. He also described the donation to the KDF of eight unarmed light transport helicopters and State Department approval of a controversial and seemingly hugely overpriced \$418 million purchase of close air support aircraft, as examples of positive American support for the Kenyan government’s efforts to deal with terrorism and violent extremism.

Prof. Kagwanja is considered an international relations and security affairs expert and has presented his analyses and opinions on governance and security at the Washington DC Africa Center for Strategic Studies - an influential think tank affiliated with the Pentagon. As a senior and respected scholar, his views count and his credibility is seldom questioned by Americans active in the post-9/11 Forever War on Global Terrorism. Whether US aid to Kenyan security forces is used effectively or KDF procurement decisions contribute to countering terrorism within East Africa is less important to the US officials involved than is protecting the American Homeland against Jihadist terrorism originating overseas. As will be explained, such disconnects between reality and fantasy, as well as different views on objectives to be achieved and relevant timelines, have created a perfect storm for national insecurity in Kenya as well as elsewhere throughout the Greater Horn of Africa.

[Kenya’s War on Terror: Scorecard and Evaluation](#)

The KDF Defence White Paper 2017, launched by President Kenyatta on 3 May 2017, emphasises threats to national security posed by neighboring states' armed forces, as well as the existential threats in the form of radicalised Islamic youth tragically influenced by external Jihadist forces to become terrorists at home and abroad. Local influences and issues that motivate violent extremism, regardless of religion or political affiliation, are glossed over and no mention is made of the sort of counterinsurgency operations conducted by the British colonial authorities in Kenya in the 1950s against Mau Mau freedom fighters -then also referred to as terrorists - who were often executed as criminals when captured rather than treated as enemy combatants. There is no reference at all to counterinsurgency operations that focus on domestically-instigated conflicts.

This White Paper perfectly captures the thinking of the government's and the country's political class and corresponds to local interpretations of the place of Kenya in America's Global War on Terrorism. Al Shabaab is essentially an insurgent group primarily fighting to take power in Somalia. It may have irredentist ambitions to establish a Greater Somalia within the Horn of Africa, and no doubt sees the frontline counties of Kenya adjacent to the international border as well as Tana River County and significant portions of the former Coast Province as being included in its area of operations. From a strategic perspective and remembering its main objectives, it is very likely that US military commanders view all of the Greater Horn of Africa as being one area of operation in the Global War on Terror -whether coordinated by Africom in Germany or US Centcom in Tampa, the enemy is Al Qaeda and its affiliate Al Shabaab, both of which are deemed to pose threats to Americans at home. The one stakeholder that has failed to embrace this expanded geographical combat zone has been Kenya which relies on borders, its role in a globalised war on terror and a notionally separate chain of command in AMISOM, to explain away the lack of progress in defeating Al Shabaab and improving domestic peace and security. It is the only actor seemingly without its own national objective.

A recent Transparency International (TI) report on Nigeria examined the negative effects of massive corruption within military procurement, troop support and administration on the war against Boko Haram. -Nigerian officials are literally stealing their soldiers' capabilities to defeat Boko Haram! Kenya is now on the cusp of Nigerian-style military procurement corruption.

Conceptually, Operation Linda Nchi was flawed from the very beginning, and not because conventionally trained soldiers cannot defeat guerrillas. There was no reason to believe that Al Shabaab would engage in direct combat with the better armed and equipped Kenya Army professionals. Al Shabaab has historically disengaged on its own terms when in contact with AMISOM forces. And like AMISOM, the motorised road-bound KDF units occupied space without significantly diminishing Al Shabaab's tactical capabilities.

Even assuming that the strategic objective underlying Operation Linda Nchi was to ultimately establish a permanent presence in support of a client semi-autonomous Jubaland Administration, the inevitable terrorist blowback within Kenya since the end of October 2011 has exposed massive cracks and gaps within Kenya's entire security architecture, which have yet to be comprehensively considered or resolved despite fairly significant expenditure on new equipment and training by foreign experts of KDF and National Police Service (NPS) units and personnel.

With the assault on the KDF-manned camps in El Adde in January 2016 and Kulbiyow a year later, Al Shabaab has shown it can still mass sufficient numbers of trained fighters to successfully assault fixed defensive positions. Such conventional attacks have revealed shocking tactical deficiencies and lack of war fighting skills among KDF company grade officers and soldiers deployed to AMISOM.

This latter revelation was completely unexpected and can be fixed but only if the KDF leadership believes there is a problem. Foreign military personnel generally avoid publicly commenting on these issues although they agree in private and off the record that the security leadership is either in deep denial or is simply not interested. There is no real disagreement about incompetence and poor military skills at all levels of the KDF.

With hindsight, Operation Linda Nchi was launched to put Kenya firmly on the side of the US and other western allies in the Global War on Terrorism but with little thought given to the country's national security needs, capacities and capabilities. For example, as KDF troop numbers increased to nearly 4,600 and the Kenyan government announced its intention to join AMISOM, the government's budgetary constraints and unanticipated consequential post- Operation Linda Nchi expenditures security operations nationwide nearly broke the bank; it became clear that much more financial support from friendly allies was required. Although Kismayu was seized at the end of September 2012 and the KDF withdrew some 800 troops, 3,660 remain assigned to AMISOM whose budgetary support (i.e. reimbursement for operational expenses, equipment losses, wear and tear, etc) remains critical to the government's cash reserves and liquidity.

Further, opportunities for corruption abound whenever military procurement and security sectors' expenditures take on lives of their own. Kenya is no exception although on a much smaller scale than in Somalia, Yemen, Iraq and Afghanistan. Corruption saps morale and discipline but also keeps conflicts from being concluded. Though the secrecy surrounding security spending makes it difficult to question its effectiveness and accurately track financial flows, it is not an impossible task. However, the media in Kenya has shown little willingness to undertake these sorts of investigations.

That the 7,000 Al Shabaab main force militiamen retain their ability to carry out attacks is not testament to their training or professionalism; Al Shabaab is just not that good. Rather, their continued resilience and successes on the battlefield shows how bad Kenya is at handling existential security threats.

Why Kenya's War on Terror Failing

In January, much media attention was focused on looming cuts in foreign assistance to African countries announced by the incoming Trump Administration, citing the need to save taxpayers' money for use at home, as well as corruption, ineffectiveness and the seemingly open-ended nature of US funding for democracy and governance programmes. Notably, Trump was asking why "we" hadn't defeated Al Shabaab after spending "hundreds of millions" on a wide range of military activities within the Horn of Africa. Divorced from the source and disregarding the so called complexities of the Global War on Terror and the much studied internal dynamics of Somalia, Trump's question is absolutely valid and worth asking not only in relation to Al Shabaab in Somalia but, more importantly, also in relation to Kenya's Forever War On Terror. To be precise, how can the abysmal performance of Kenyan security forces in its war against Al Shabaab be explained?

As this article is being written, Al Shabaab militants have ramped up their terror campaign in the counties of Mandera and Garissa; at least fourteen police officers were killed in three roadside explosions this week with many more wounded. In March this year, Al Shabaab announced its intention to disrupt the Kenya General Elections scheduled to be held in August. In fact, since early May attacks on soft targets have occurred with increasing frequency.

Regardless of all the renewed expressions of financial and military assistance coming out of the London Conference, Al Shabaab continues to launch terror attacks in and around Mogadishu with relative impunity. Its forces in southern Somalia move freely, and when Ethiopian forces not assigned to AMISOM withdrew without notice from towns and villages they had occupied, Al

Shabaab quickly reasserted control.

In many ways, the conditions that allowed an Al Qaeda sleeper cell to destroy the US Embassy in 1998 have become even more favourable for Al Qaeda, Al Shabaab, ISIS, narcotics traffickers, poachers and international fraudsters.

On 7 August 1998, Al Qaeda terrorists blew up the US Embassy located in Nairobi's central business district; a simultaneous attack on a similar target in Dar es Salaam was less successful. Investigations into the Nairobi attack showed that an Al Qaeda sleeper cell had entered Kenya in 1993/94, acquired Kenyan IDs and passports, registered companies, opened bank accounts, established families and conducted business at the coast; all their documentation had either been obtained fraudulently or lawfully because of lapses and oversights in enforcing regulations and applicable laws in place 20 years before. In 2002 surviving Al Qaeda terrorists still in place in Kenya were able to successfully detonate a vehicle borne IED in the reception of the Israeli-owned Paradise Hotel on the north coast of Mombasa. Another Al Qaeda team managed to drive next to the runway at Mombasa's Moi International Airport when an Israeli charter flight was taking off for Tel Aviv with a full load of tourists and fired surface-to-air missiles, smuggled over land from Somalia, at the plane. The missiles failed to hit the 747 but the terrorists also managed to elude capture. In 2010, Al Shabaab successfully detonated explosives in Kampala during which two venues crowded with World Cup spectators were hit. Subsequent investigations showed that much of the Al Shabaab planning, organisation and financing took place in Kenya where alleged terrorists were arrested and renditioned to stand trial in Uganda.

A recent Transparency International (TI) report on Nigeria examined the negative effects of massive corruption within military procurement, troop support and administration on the war against Boko Haram. -Nigerian officials are literally stealing their soldiers' capabilities to defeat Boko Haram! Kenya is now on the cusp of Nigerian-style military procurement corruption. The acquisition of much needed IOMAX Air Tractor Close Air Support aircraft referred to by Prof. Kagwanja has been delayed - possibly irrevocably - because the original equipment manufacturer contends that the KDF is paying \$125 million more than it should and getting them from a US Defence Contractor, L3 Technologies, that has no track record of supplying this sort of aircraft; in effect a "super broker" eating up to \$125 million of Kenyan taxpayer money. The allegations are yet to be substantiated, though the US Air Force has been accused of not cooperating with congressional investigations.

As previously mentioned, the US has castigated Kenya for not doing enough to tackle terrorist financing; Kenya remained for another three years on a Financial Action Task Force (FATF) watch list of countries failing to enact legislation to curb money laundering and other assorted financial crimes. The still unresolved scam at the National Youth Service, dating back to early 2016, showed 28 commercial banks failing to report cash transactions in excess of \$10,000 to the Central Bank of Kenya's Financial Reporting Centre, as required by laws designed to curb money laundering.

The administrative chaos and regulatory confusion in Kenya militates against the prevention of the sorts of criminal activity that has brought down Dubai Bank, Imperial Bank, Chase Bank, Tsavo Securities, Discount Securities, Loita Asset Managers, Ngenye Kariuki Stockbrokers, and others. Vast amounts of money have gone missing through clever manipulation of existing laws and regulations, lax and/or complicit GOK regulators, and an overburdened outdated judicial system.

Three years ago, 18 foreign heads of mission, including US Ambassador Godec, jointly issued a letter demanding that the government put its financial house in order by enacting laws and actually implementing its own legislation. However, no timelines were set nor any punitive action described.

In many ways, the conditions that allowed an Al Qaeda sleeper cell to destroy the US Embassy in 1998 have become even more favourable for Al Qaeda, Al Shabaab, ISIS, narcotics traffickers, poachers and international fraudsters. Yet this has seemingly had no effect on how American tax money is spent in Kenya. The only logical explanation is that the consistent and short-term protection of the [American] Homeland is the overarching priority of the US Government; Kenya is a sovereign country and what the natives do with our “training, assistance and advice” is really not something we can or should dictate. In any case the real dilemma is that Kenya - the government, the political class, the private sector and its mainstream media - is its own incubator of national insecurity and the situation can only get worse.

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