

In October of 2007, the Washington Post noted that Obama had “fulminated against ‘lobbyists’ and ‘insiders,’ and claimed that (he) will end ‘business as usual’ in Washington if elected president.” Obama said at a 1 October 2008 campaign stop in Wisconsin, "You need leadership you can trust to work for you, not for the special interests who have had their thumb on the scale. And together, we will tell Washington, and their lobbyists, that their days of setting the agenda are over. They have not funded my campaign. You have. They will not run my White House. You'll help me run my White House."

Lobbyists are under government and public scrutiny and according to a report released after a two-year-long investigation by the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, some Washington lobbyists and lawyers helped launder millions of dollars for allegedly corrupt African politicians and their relatives. This comes at the heel of scandals involving high profile Washington lobbyists. One of the high profile cases involves Robert J. Cabelly, the head and founder of a Washington D.C. based PR and lobbying firm called C/R International, who was indicted on 8 charges including money laundry, passport fraud and making false statements. Cabelly was a former US State Department official in the George H.W. Bush and Clinton administrations and has represented a number of African governments with poor human rights records, including Ethiopia. According to a 20 May 2001 Inter Press Service report, “USA: African Governments Spend Millions on Lobbying”:

“...Ethiopia has also paid a great deal to lobbyists, particularly after the outbreak of war in May 1998. It hired Verner Liipfert for some 225,000 dollars a year and C/R International at 300,000 dollars a year...”ⁱ

But Cabelly is not the only ex-US government official that has become a lobbyist for unsavory regimes such as the minority regime in Ethiopia. Samuel Olara, a Ugandan human rights activist wrote the following in an 11 November 2009 article, “Dictatorship is Good for Lobbyists” in The Independent:

“...Past their sell-by-date, African dictators are getting a chance at respectability and creature comforts, thanks to former government officials, and ex-diplomats, turned savvy PR mercenaries. African strongmen and their hatchet men have realised that they have a fighting chance of holding onto power, by simply spending billions on aid and other scarce state resources, to hire the services of the best lobbyists money can buy in influential western capitals. As hired-hands, lobbyists and PR agents make their fortunes by burnishing the images of these dictatorships and advancing their undemocratic interests against those of their own countries...”

In that article he writes about Jendayi E. Frazer, the former US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs who orchestrated the US-backed Ethiopian invasion of Somalia on 24 December 2006. He writes:

“...Ms Jendayi Frazer, a professor at Carnegie Mellon University, who was Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs under President George W. Bush, has become a consummate PR mercenary for the autocratic regime of Yoweri Museveni of Uganda... Frazer's article was crafted to help advance specific interests of African governments like Uganda. This is because Frazer is now a lobbyist... Since they were booted out of the White House, Frazer has taken up a position as a "strategic advisor" to Rosa Whitaker of the Whitaker Group, contracted to look after Yoweri Museveni's interests in Washington... Although there are distinct limits to what they can achieve, lobbyists remain the undemocratic, unofficial means through which pariah regimes advance their interests in Washington...”

But it is not only Obama that is fighting the lobbyists...some lawmakers are too.

On 2 October 2006 Congressman Donald Payne (D-NJ) and members of the United States House Subcommittee on Africa had a hearing on the state of democracy and human rights in Ethiopia. Frustrated with previous attempts to pass legislation that would sanction the minority regime in Ethiopia for its gross human rights violations, Congressman Payne began his statement with this:

“...the Ethiopian government has spent tens of thousands of dollars to lobby to kill this bill [HR-2003]. I hope the message goes out loud and clear that this particular group of Congress people and this subcommittee in Congress is not for sale...”

Unfortunately, even though the Bill was passed unanimously in the House, it was killed before it made it to the Senate. Meles Zenawi's lobbyists and his “skirted friends” in the Bush Administration managed to kill it. So who are the lobbyists and who are the lawmakers that are being lobbied on behalf of Ethiopia's genocidal regime?

Marina Walker Guevara in her 22 May 2007 article, “Allegiance Rewarded-Ethiopia reaps U.S. aid by enlisting in war on terror and hiring influential lobbyists”, wrote about the minority regime in Ethiopia and who is providing it the diplomatic and political shield as it violated international law and commits international crimes in Ethiopia and Somalia. She wrote:

“...Mandatory lobbying disclosure records filed with the Department of Justice show that from April to August 2006, DLA Piper lobbyists talked on the phone and met numerous times with the staffs of the House International Relations Committee; Rep. Mike Honda (D-Calif.), chairman of the Congressional Ethiopia and Ethiopian American Caucus; the congressional affairs section of the Department of State; and Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.), a member of the Congressional Black Caucus and 2008 presidential candidate...The bill never made it to the House floor. The Bureau of African Affairs at the State Department objected to the bill as being "too punitive" and getting in the way of U.S. foreign policy, according to a source with knowledge of the negotiations surrounding the bill. "They did everything they could to sabotage it," the source said...A State Department spokesman, Steve Lauterbach, told the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) that the bill was "prescriptive" and "limiting" on how foreign aid to Ethiopia should be spent...”

It should be recalled that in addition to HR-2003, several Bills introduced by US lawmakers have been killed by Meles Zenawi’s million dollar lobbyists, his “skirted friends” and advocates within the US State Department. Suffice it to mention a few:

- **H.R. 2760 -Resolution of the Ethiopia-Eritrea Border Dispute Act of 2004 (July 2003)**
- **HR-5321 Free and Fair Elections in Ethiopia Act (October 2004)**
- **HR-935-Free and Fair Elections in Ethiopia Act (17 February 2005)**
- **H.R. 4423- the Ethiopia Consolidation Act of 2005 (18 November 2005)**
- **HR-5680- Ethiopia Freedom, Democracy, and Human Rights Advancement Act of 2006 was approved by the International Relations Committee on 27 June 2006**
- **H.R. 2228- The Ethiopia Freedom, Democracy, and Human Rights Advancement Act of 2007- (9 May 2007)**

Under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), individuals who engage in lobbying on behalf of foreign entities are required to register with the US government and file semi-annual reports on their activities. All of these filings are public information and available on the Justice Department’s website. Ethiopia has a per capita GDP of only \$800 and received \$467 million in U.S. aid in 2007, according to the latest figures available. FARA records show that Ethiopia spent \$2.3 million securing the services of three firms, including DLA Piper, to defend its access to U.S. money.

According to the **Foreign Lobbyist Influence** Tracker database, a joint project of [ProPublica](#) and the [Sunlight Foundation](#), lobbyists working for Meles Zenawi’s minority

regime made 813 contacts with lawmakers, legislative assistants, media and others. The three lobbying firms listed are DLA Piper, Dewey and LeBoeuf and Mark Saylor Co.

- **Of the 813 contacts made through email, fax, phone etc. 645 were made by DLA Piper, 138 by Mark Saylor Co and 31 were made by Dewey and LeBoeuf.**
- **There were 92 contacts made on the issue of “Somalia” and 82 contacts on the issue of “UNMEE” by DLA Piper. On the Bill-HR 2003, there were 113 contacts made by DLA Piper and the names of two Senators contacted are listed. They were Senator James N. Inhofe (R-Oklahoma) and Senator Benjamin Cardin (D-Maryland).**
- **Of the 138 contacts made by Mark Saylor and Co, majority of them were made with journalists and Editors of various news outlets. There were about 20 contacts with the New York Times, 12 with the Seattle Intelligencer, 8 contacts with the Seattle Times, 7 with the Washington Times, and about 5 contacts with various Jewish news outlets and 3 with The Cutting Edge. Of the “issues” listed, 8 were about “Eritrea”, 7 was with the NY Times and 1 was with J. Norris , Committee Staffer, Committee Staffer, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. Interestingly, there are a couple of entries about rallies in support of Senator James Inhofe (R-Oklahoma). Why would an Ethiopian lobbyist be involved in a rally for a US Congressman?**
- **Of the 31 contacts made by Dewey and LeBoeuf, 3 were made with the US Mission to the United Nations and 27 were made with the US Department of State. One other contact is not listed. There were a total of 6 contacts with James Swan, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs and the Bureau of African Affairs (Swan has been the U.S Ambassador to Djibouti since October 2008) and 4 contacts were made with James Knight of the Office of East African Affairs (Knight has been the U.S. Ambassador to Benin since November 2009). Both these officials authored anti-Eritrea reports in 2008 and presented them at various US educational institutions.**

It has been interesting to look at the lobbyists and their contacts because it reveals an interesting link. In the two years, 2007 and 2008, that are covered in this database, it looks like the minority regime had all its bases covered-The United States Congress, the US State Department and the media, were all lobbied by three different lobbyists. There are of course lobbying activities by these and other lobbyists in the regime’s

employ that have not been mentioned in the database, but have been reported by others in the past.

For example, DLA Piper lobbyists attended a European Parliamentary meeting that was held in Brussels in June 2008. It was a hearing about the worsening political and human rights situation in Ethiopia. According to reports Dr. Berhanu Nega, Mayor-elect of Addis Ababa and leader of G7 movement, representatives from the European parliament's committees of the Human rights, Development and ACP-EU representatives, as well as representatives of the International Crisis Group and several Ethiopians attended the hearing. It should be recalled that Dr. Berhane Nega has been sentenced to death (in absentia) by the genocidal regime in Ethiopia. Not surprisingly, DLA Piper has been the focus of protests in Washington DC over its role advising the Ethiopian government. Adverts have been posted on a taxi bearing the slogan "DLA Piper shares blood money with Ethiopian dictators.

Speaking of dictators and blood money, it should be recalled that Joseph Grieboski, a known associate of the minority regime in Ethiopia and a benefactor, to the tune of \$250,000 from the US State Department was the author of the outlandish 8 December 2008 report "Iran deploys Troops, Ballistic Missiles to Eritrea", posted on The Cutting Edge (Mark Saylor and Co.). That story was spun by various Israeli news sites and more. Just days before he authored that piece, Grieboski played host to various Ethiopian officials, including Meles Zenawi's wife and the Ethiopian Ambassador to the United States. He is also the same Joseph Griebosky, founder of the Institute on Religion and Public Policy who wrote the following letter on behalf of the genocidal minority regime in Ethiopia:

"...Ethiopia has made outstanding progress in democratic development, human rights, religious freedom, political and civil rights. Despite this improvement, the House of Representatives wishes to impose its own timeline and its own standards on Ethiopia's advance... H.R.2003 is a threat to American political and security interests in the Horn of Africa and in Africa as a whole and only serves to alienate yet another ally with a sticks-but-no-carrots approach to foreign policy...It is imperative that the United States Senate reexamines the merits of H.R. 2003 as currently drafted and amend the bill to provide the appropriate democratic tools and capacity-building agenda, before it causes undue harm to American interests..."

As we know, the Bill was killed. A 23 October 2007 news report, "N.J. lawmaker battles Ethiopia" by Washington correspondent Herb Jackson tells the story of how and why. Here is an excerpt from that report:

“...Smith was able last year to get the bill through the House International Relations Committee, where he chaired the Africa subcommittee. But the bill went no further, and Smith suspects the reason why was that former House Majority Leader Dick Armey, R-Texas, had been hired as a lobbyist for the Ethiopian government... Smith and Payne had better luck and the bill was approved by a unanimous voice vote earlier this month...But that may be as far as it goes, Smith said. Individual senators have the power to place “holds” on legislation that are rarely overturned, and Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., has criticized the bill because it “focuses only on shortcomings and blatantly ignores the unprecedented progress the country has made” ...Smith said the United States should be able to put conditions on the aid it gives other countries... “No regime that terrorizes its citizens can be a reliable ally in the war on terror,” Smith said. “Ethiopia’s a great country. It deserves better, frankly, than the government they have...”

Congressman Smith’s frustrations are understandable. Every Eritrean-American, Ethiopian-American and Somali-American is asking the same question. Why is the United States government cuddling Meles Zenawi, the only known terrorist that is lurking in the Horn of Africa? How can these lawmakers and officials sleep at night knowing the crimes against humanity that are being perpetrated by the minority regime in Ethiopia? The mercenary minority regime has created havoc in the region, invaded and occupied sovereign Eritrean and Somali territories, massacred hundreds and thousands of its own citizens and Somalis, has detained all opposition leaders including Birtukan Medeksa (who has been languishing in jail for the last two years), has sentenced journalists and others to death (in absentia), committed genocides and burned entire villages in the Gambela, Ogaden and Oromia regions of Ethiopia etc. etc.

Virginia Congressman Frank Wolff in his 19 October 2005 letter to Condoleezza Rice regarding Robert Cabelly and C/R Congressman seems to be as perplexed:

“...it comes as no surprise. Increasingly this town has appeared up for grabs to the highest bidder, with well reputed lobbying shops representing the interests of some of the world’s most unsavory governments, among them major human rights abusers. But while some are driven largely by profit motives, I would have hoped for more from the American government... How can an American company exercise such bad judgment - choosing to represent a government suspected of perpetrating genocide by organizing and arming militias...?”

In an Oct. 15 letter to President Barack Obama, Congressman Wolf again wrote:

“It is unconscionable that any government with blood on its hands be permitted the privilege of having a Washington lobbyist on retainer,”

Yes it is unconscionable, but it happens. He ought to be addressing his colleagues on the Hill. There are some unscrupulous lawmakers and officials in the US State Department and the various media outlets that are willing to play. It would be nice to know what the multi million dollar “contacts”, the lies, bootlicking and shenanigans have delivered for the people of Ethiopia. Absolutely nothing. Ethiopia remains the poorest nation on earth, scores the lowest in each and every human development index, rates highest in corruption, HIV-AIDS in out of control, Ethiopia's children are sold in shoddy adoption schemes etc. etc. It was not my intention to uncover all the “diplomatic” activities of the minority regime in Washington...Others will have to dig and do more research to unearth the rest of its dirt...

Ok, I dug a little bit more. I wanted to see if the same lies, bootlicking and deceptive ploys were going on in Europe. It is not easy to get information on lobbyists in Europe, here in the USA; lobbyists are required to file detailed reports to Congress twice a year, listing their clients, fees and issues they follow. In the EU, lobbyists operate without restriction...But after digging a bit, I found out that the minority regime in Ethiopia is represented by Burson-Marsteller, one of the biggest lobbying firms in Brussels. According to information on its website, Burson-Marsteller by merging with Arcay Communications, a leading South African firm headquartered in Johannesburg, says that the merger will significantly impact “our footprint in Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA)”.

So what exactly is Burson-Masteller’s job? For that I will refer to an article, “An Insider in Brussels: Lobbyists Reshape the European Union” written by Elke Cronenberg in the Swedish magazine VI. Cronenberg writes:

“...Part of [Burson-Marsteller](#) job, along with image shaping, is the traditional damage control strategies that PR firms employ when a client corporation is caught in a scandal. Another function, common in the US and rapidly spreading around Europe, is influencing government policy and shaping it to benefit the client's corporate needs. Sometimes this job requires positioning hand-picked experts, creating fake "grassroots" group, and arranging apparently objective scientific studies to support the client's interests...”

Hand picked experts? Creating fake “grassroots” group? Hmm, now that sounds familiar.

So why is Meles Zenawi spending so much money on lobbyists when his people are starving and 60% of Ethiopia's national budget is subsidized by donors? For that answer, I will refer to Gayle Smith, someone who knows Meles Zenawi and his TPLF partners. Peter Rosenblum in his 2002 article "Irrational Exuberance-The Clinton Administration in Africa" describes Smith as a "confidante of the Tigrean leadership" and a "booster for Meles". Gayle Smith, served in the Clinton Administration is also back serving under the Obama Administration. In a 1991 Magazine article "Birth Pains of a New Ethiopia" published in The Nation (Vol. 253, July 1, 1991) Smith wrote about the regime in Ethiopia. She wrote:

"...Just who are these "rebels" that the United States has endorsed to lead Ethiopia into the future? The mainstream media have variously described them as "scruffy" and "disciplined," as "hillbillies" and "Marxists." The E.P.R.D.F. is, in fact, scruffy -- understandably so, since its fighters hail from some of the poorest regions of one of the world's poorest countries and have never enjoyed the uniforms that external support affords. They are also well disciplined, having fought successfully against the largest standing army in sub-Saharan Africa. "Hillbillies"? Yes, the vast majority of the E.P.R.D.F.'s fighting men and women are from the rural areas of Ethiopia, speak a poor person's dialect and have little formal education save that offered by the movement... Public relations have never been at E.P.R.D.F.'s strong suit..."

Meles Zenawi's regime now enjoys "the uniforms that external support affords", but as one astute Ethiopian observer wrote "the current regime in Ethiopia is nothing more than a group of fanatic warlords disguised in Armani suit to blend with a civilized world". Judging from the lobbyists in its employ, it also looks like these fanatic warlords in Western suits have also found a remedy for their poor "public relations".

Speaking of public relations... Allow me end my piece with by sharing a story about Meles Zenawi and his idea of public relations and neighborly cooperation, which have earned him international scorn. The story is about a European diplomat that had visited the Horn of Africa a few years ago. It will illustrate the mentality of the minority regime in Addis Ababa, its incurable inferiority complex and the Eritrea-mania that pervades its rule.

The European diplomat's visit began in Ethiopia and she was going to travel to Kenya, Sudan and Eritrea afterwards. During her visit in Ethiopia, she had a chance to meet with Meles Zenawi, and it was during their talks that she unwittingly mentioned that she was also going to visit Eritrea and hold similar talks with the government of Eritrea and its

officials. The street-smart Meles Zenawi decided that he would give her a bit of “personal advice”. He told her that if she was going to meet with H.E. President Isaias Afwerki (PIA) of Eritrea, he would advise her not to meet with him alone, as he was “prone to violence” and that he might hit her. But that was not all that he did. What he did next is more childish than what he said to the visiting diplomat.

As soon as she left his palace, Meles Zenawi decided to call one of the Presidents in the region and tell him what he had said/done and asked him to repeat the same warning about PIA when she arrived in his city. Unfortunately, there are some African leaders whose friendships are not based on trust and respect, but rather on such deceptive and wicked ploys and as the saying goes...It takes one to know one...and Meles sure can spot one when he sees one. Anyway, the other President met with the visiting diplomat and at the end of her visit, when she mentioned that she was going to go to Eritrea, he did exactly as Meles told him to do, and warned her about meeting with PIA alone. He too told her that PIA was prone to violence.

Understandably, she felt a bit weary about going to Eritrea and meeting with PIA, but decided to go anyway as it was already in her itinerary. She arrived in Asmara and was very well received. In the afternoon hours, she met with PIA for the first time and they talked briefly. She again met with him the next day and was his guest at a dinner he hosted in her honor. Nothing happened. None of the things that Meles and the other President warned her about took place. She said she watched him speak and said he never raised his voice and seemed to be very relaxed. She said that, contrary to what she was told about him, he never interrupted her and he listened to everything she had to say before he offered his own views and opinions.

Needless to say, she did not leave Asmara without telling everyone about Meles and his partner in crime. She was angry with Meles and the other leader for the lies they had told her about PIA. She didn't understand how leaders -two of them-could tell such outlandish and childish lies to defame a leader of country. She described PIA as a gentleman and an exemplary African leader who is loved and respected by the Eritrean people.

These attempts to paint Eritrea and its leadership in such a negative light are not new. It is an old and embarrassing tactic that the regime has been using for the last 18 years. By paying millions to lobbyists to do its bidding, in its warped mind, it must think it is really “winning” in the “diplomatic” game. It is not. Meles Zenawi and his mercenary minority regime have become the laughing stock of Washington and a complete embarrassment to Ethiopians all over the world. Meles and his gang don't get it...do they? When they

say Meles Zenawi is a “staunch US ally”, what they are trying to say is what Franklin Roosevelt said about another dictator, "He may be an SOB, but at least he's our SOB."

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

ⁱ <http://www.corpwatch.org/article.php?id=98>