

The Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group: Another July, another Ethiopian-Authored Forgery Expected

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The Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group (SEMG) is expected to issue another one of its annual reports on Eritrea's compliance/noncompliance with UN sanctions 1907(2009) and 2023(2011). However, as usual, the report is predicted to be neither objective, nor impartial, or truthful. Why? Because in the words of Doctor Mashabane, South African Deputy Ambassador to the UN, the SEMG is a group that has yet *"to execute its responsibilities and mandate ... with professionalism, impartiality and objectivity"*¹. It is a Group created for political purposes, and has been used and abused by a veto wielding member of the Security Council, the United States.



The Monitoring Group has been repeatedly used as a conduit of disinformation campaign against Eritrea, the only country in its neighborhood that has refused to embrace Washington's wrong policies on the Horn of Africa in general and Somalia in particular. On the other hand, the U.S. and Ethiopia, the two countries that are primarily responsible for the chaos in Somalia, are using the Monitoring Group to cover their blood-stained tracks. U.S. policy for the Horn of Africa is known for its one consistency: saving tyrannical Ethiopian regimes at the expense of Eritrea and its people. In the past four decades it had tried to save an atrocious emperor, a brutal Communist dictator and now an equally abominable if not worse, apartheid-minded minority government. It has never been about helping people or

stabilizing the region. Not even about the interest of the American public. Never!

As in the past we can expect the Monitoring Group's report to be a repackaging of intelligence agents fabrications (mainly Ethiopian). The Ethiopian regime is notoriously known for "feeding false intelligence about terrorists", and American officials from Clinton, to Rice, from Carson to Yamamoto are all well aware of it. Yet they have been Ethiopia's willing partners, and in many cases coaches of this fraudulent diplomacy. All, in a futile hope of using "Ethiopian Crusaders" to curb "Islamic Fundamentalists" in the Horn of Africa. Wrong measures do not make a right. These uninformed policies are not good for the American people, definitely not for the unfortunate people of the Horn.

The Dubious Source of the Monitoring Report

Last year, Ambassador Susan Rice was at the forefront peddling Ethiopian lies about an alleged bombing plot on an African Union summit in Addis Ababa. However, as Russian Ambassador Vitaly Churkin put it

¹ Ambassador Mashabane, December 5, 2011

"the Security Council was not presented with convincing proof of Eritrea's involvement in that incident [the 'planned terrorist attack' in Addis Ababa during the African Union summit there]. We have not seen the results of any investigation of that incident, if indeed there was one...."² Nevertheless, Rice used this fabricated story to intimidate non permanent members of the Security Council to vote for its evil agenda of more sanctions against Eritrea. We can expect the same this time around. We haven't seen the end of Rice's vindictive plans for Eritrea, not yet.

Of course Rice was also well aware of the workings of the Ethiopian intelligence. As a leaked U.S. diplomatic cable clearly shows, U.S. officials, not the least Susan Rice, knew very well how Ethiopian intelligence fabricates and stages stories of bombings, not to mention about the African Union summit. Here is one:

"On September 16, three bomb explosions were reported in the Kara Kore area of Addis Ababa. The explosions were heard at 4:45 a.m., 7:00 a.m., and 10:00 a.m. The National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS), together with the Federal Police Anti-terror Task Force later reported that the bombs were part of a coordinated terror attack by the OLF and Shaabiya (Eritrea) aimed at disrupting democratic development. ...They also said that the bombs used contained parts sourced from Eritrea and were consistent with bombs used in previous terrorist attacks. ...The GoE announced that the bombs went off while being assembled, and that the three dead were terrorists from the outlawed Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) with links to the Oromo National Congress (ONC). **An embassy source, as well as clandestine reporting, suggests that the bombing may have in fact been the work of the GoE security forces. ... Clandestine reporting indicates that the bombs did not explode inside the structure, but rather appear to have been placed outside and detonated.**"³ (emphasis added)

The above Ethiopian bombing plot, blamed on Eritrea, was carried as Ethiopia was preparing to invade Somalia (at the prodding of America). The mission: to overthrow the Islamic Courts Union. The fall of 2006. The ICU was a Somali force that had managed to restore law and order to lawless Somalia for the first time in 15 years. One of the two leaders of that ICU that was ousted by the Ethiopian invasion, Sheikh Sherif, is now the President of the TFG. What purifying "Holy water" must have been sprinkled on him to instantaneously morph from a "terrorist" to a trusted ally? It is a puzzle we leave historians to explain. The second one, Sheikh Aweys, is also now worth \$0.00 (ZERO dollars) of the total \$33 million the U.S. has put for the heads of several Al-Shabab militants. In other words, as far as U.S. officials go, Sheikh Daheer Aweys is also another "moderate man similar to *Sheikh Sharif Ahmed*," a man they could do business with. If the two leaders of the ICU were considered moderates, then why go through an invasion to oust them in the first place? Was the aim to create an extremist group like Al-Shabab so that

² Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, December 5, 2011.

³ "6(C) DAS Wycoff assured Meles that the U.S. remains committed to achieving a UNSC sanctions regime against Asmara and continues to broaden the discussion beyond the P3 and Uganda with a hard push by USUN [Susan Rice]. He said the USG was also expanding efforts to undercut support for Asmara, noting for example he been sent on a trip to Cairo, Riyadh, Jeddah and other cities both to promote efforts to undercut flows of support to Asmara " 7. (C) Pressed by Wycoff to describe the "pro-active" measures being considered, Meles said one option would be to directly support opposition groups that are capable of sending 'armed propaganda units' into Eritrea Meles said that the groups with the most capability to operate inside Eritrea are those "that you don't like from the lowlands, like the Keru" who he said would be "much better able to survive in Eritrea." (NOTE. The Keru are a primarily Muslim ethnic group most of whose members live in Eritrea, although a minority live in Ethiopia. END NOTE." -- US Embassy in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) Fri, 6 Oct 2006
<http://wikileaks.org/cable/2006/10/06ADDISABABA2708.html>

it would be an excuse for a perpetual occupation of Somalia and intervention? If so, one should congratulate the U.S. and Ethiopia for their joint invasion which has left Somalia in a more chaotic state than they found it on Christmas Eve of 2006. Unfortunately now their wish has come true; the region is infested with all sort of extremists.

The same OLF and “Shaabiya” (Eritrea) who were accused of a plot inside Addis and against the African Union summit in 2006, were also accused of the January 2011 plot against another African Union summit. It was all designed to slap Eritrea with yet another undeserved sanction. The Monitoring Group for its part shamelessly told the Security Council that Colonel “Gemachew Ayana” was the “Eritrean” mastermind behind the Addis Ababa bombing plot. As pleasant as the meaning of his name (in Oromiffa Gemachew = Happiness/Joy), however, neither Gemachew nor Ayana are ever used in any naming schemes of Eritrea’s nine ethnic groups. This was an easily verifiable fact. But, the Monitoring Group was told, by Ethiopia, the primary source of all its accusations against Eritrea, that “Gemachew” was an Eritrean intelligence officer and without doing even an elementary verification ran away with it and Mrs. Rice for her part, knowing well it was a fabricated story, started wagging her finger at Eritrea. It is so sad to see the power of the United States being abused for one ambassador’s personal vendetta.

Ethiopia is also in the habit of fabricating lies every January-February. This is designed for the fabrication to make it to the SEMG annual report in July. This reprehensible tradition is continuing unabated. This past January of 2012, the accusation against Eritrea was that Eritrea was responsible for the vicious murder of “five tourists -- two Germans, two Hungarians, and an Austrian --[who] were killed execution style”. The killing of these innocent tourists is reprehensible. However, their murder is very suspicious and none of us can say it is beyond the regime in Addis Ababa to stage it. Here is how the Christian Science Monitor seems to expose the Ethiopian ploy:

“This week, even before Ethiopian officials knew how many people had died, or even when the fatal shooting of five European tourists in its remote northeastern region of Afar had taken place, they were sure of one crucial detail: It was Eritrea's fault.”(emphasis added)⁴

The newspaper is insinuating that Ethiopia blamed Eritrea before the act actually happened. The same accusation had been labeled against Eritrea five years ago. Here is as Ambassador Yamamoto cabled it to Washington on April of 2007 (We quote him at length because the cable is very revealing):

“During the question session, Meles was emotional in asking why Eritrea did not want to resolve the border dispute. He characterized Eritrea as a state sponsor of terrorism. Eritrea supports extremism in Somalia, seeking to destabilize the country. Eritrean agents were caught during the African Union Summit at the end of January. Border tensions are due to Eritrea supporting rebel groups seeking to overthrow Ethiopia. Finally, the taking of British Embassy and Ethiopian hostages along the border was a clear act of terrorism by Eritrea. Meles hinted that he was developing a case against Eritrea and was reviewing if and how to raise it at the United Nations.

“---Fixated on Eritrea:---

“After two weeks of meetings by the ruling party (EPRDF) and the secretariat (TPLF), Ethiopian officials have embarked on a campaign to isolate Eritrea

⁴ Christian Science Monitor, January 19, 2012, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2012/0119/Attack-on-foreign-tourists-widens-rift-between-Ethiopia-Eritrea>

and to attack it as a state sponsor of terrorism. State Minister Takeda called select Ambassadors from the diplomatic corps to charge Eritrea as a terrorist state behind the kidnappings of five British Embassy staff and nine Ethiopians. ... It is clearly seeking international pressure and sanctions against Eritrea to contain its destabilizing activities in the region. We have advised the Prime Minister and his senior leadership to separate the kidnappings and Eritrea's involvement, stressing the humanitarian nature of the continued captivity of the Ethiopian victims. In addition, any case against Eritrea should be raised by other countries. Any charges levied by Ethiopia would be viewed only in the context of their border conflict. The aggressive approach to Eritrea and Meles, emotional comments on Eritrea, indicate Ethiopia's single minded focus on linking some of the extremist activities in Somalia to Eritrea, and that resolution of Somalia's problems depends on the international community containing and isolating Isaias and the Eritreans." (emphasis added)⁵

First note how the cable is revealing how the sanctions that were imposed on Eritrea were being hatched by Addis Ababa and Washington. All IGAD members that were made to line up against Eritrea later, including Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia and Uganda were all on friendly terms with Eritrea before this cable. Look also how Ethiopia had been using "The African Union Summit" card on another January long before the January 2011 accusation that was sponsored by Susan Rice.

Second, Ambassador Yamamoto knew well what his colleague had reported from Asmara (he was copied on the cable). Yet we don't read Yamamoto telling Meles the truth. Instead he is advising him how he should package his lies. Of course this was before the lies packaging Group, the Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group was given a mandate to speak on behalf of Ethiopia. Before Rice became the reigning **Caesar (czar)** at the UN. It also shows how U.S. officials have been working hand and glove with Ethiopian officials to frame up Eritrea. In any case, here is Ambassador Scott Delisi's cable two weeks before Yamamoto's cable.

"Despite the GSE's lack of transparency in communication with the British and French Embassies and despite the questions lingering around possible linkages between the GSE and the ARDUF, **there is no indication at this time that Eritrea was involved in any way with the kidnapping, and in fact, the GSE appears overall to have played a proactive role in facilitating the release of the abductees.** ... **As noted Post has no basis for believing that the GSE either ordered or orchestrated the kidnapping -- nor, despite its likely ties to ARDUF, do we have any reason to believe that the GSE could have taken any further actions to resolve the situation more expeditiously than it did.**"⁶

We can expect the Monitoring Group to regurgitate Ethiopian accusation against Eritrea about the unfortunate incident of the tourists; it will not be surprising if it is verbatim as the Ethiopians wrote it. As we said above, it is all about saving Ethiopia rather than reporting facts or working for the stability of the Horn of Africa region.

One thing is also certain: the Monitoring Group is not expected to report on Ethiopia's destabilizing effort on Somalia or Ethiopia's open support for those elements who are trying to destabilize Eritrea. In

⁵ US Embassy Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) Cable, Mon, 2 Apr 2007, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2007/04/07ADDISABABA978.html>

⁶ US Embassy Asmara (Eritrea) Cable, Thur, 15 Mar 2007 <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2007/03/07ASMARA300.html>

other words, the Monitoring Group cannot be expected to report truthfully on all those forces of destabilization, prime among them: Ethiopia, the epicenter of every destabilizing force in the Horn. Again, the mandate of the Monitoring Group is to save the Ethiopian regime not the region; definitely it was not designed to save Somalia. Somalia is being dismembered left and right by its neighbors.

Any report written in collaboration with the Ethiopian Government that continues to occupy sovereign Eritrean territories, one that is openly hostile to, and had made public pronouncements that it will leave no stone unturned in order to destabilize Eritrea, a regime that had openly admitted to the Americans that it is training "people the Americans do not like"⁷ (terrorists) in order to disrupt Eritrean economic progress, should not be taken as credible no matter who stands tomorrow in front of the UN microphones in its support. All what it is going to be is a repackaging of what the Ethiopian intelligence services concocted; and the Monitoring Group, as usual, is going to peddle it as its own. That was exactly what it did in the past, and nothing can be expected to be different come mid July 2012.

The 2% Issue

The Monitoring Group is also expected to bundle lies on how the Eritrean Government uses "force and extortion to collect the 2% rehabilitation tax from its citizens abroad". Let's remember that cutting off Eritrean Diaspora remittance has been the obsession of Susan Rice ever since the Eritrea-Ethiopia war broke out in 1998. She had wrongly assumed that if she cuts off Eritrean Diaspora remittance, Eritrea's resolve to defend itself will be broken. This of course was an ignorance of Eritrean history. It was neither money nor weapons that helped Eritrea triumph over a larger, better equipped and politically protected Ethiopian armies, but the will and determination of its people. That remittance of will and determination can never be sanctioned. At any rate, here is how Jane Perlez of the New York Times, put Rice's intentions during the war:

"As the Ethiopians step up their assault by bombing targets near Eritrean Red Sea ports, the diplomats say they are still talking to both sides. But they are also considering more severe sanctions, like Limiting the ability of the Eritreans to collect remittances from friends and relatives in the United States."(emphasis added)⁸

The newspaper makes it clear one of the diplomats mentioned above was Susan Rice. Rice's has also been coordinating with the Ethiopian Prime Minister about this very evil act of cutting off Eritrean Diaspora remittances, as soon as she came back to power on the back of Obama.

"Prime Minister Meles underscored to US-UN Ambassador Rice during a six-hour meeting ... Isaias' calculations would be shattered, if the U.S. and others imposed financial sanctions on him and particularly cut off ... the important funding from the Diaspora in the U.S. Isaias still imposes a mandatory 2 percent of salary tax on all Eritreans living overseas. Nonpayment results in family members in Eritrea being denied food ration cards." (emphasis added)⁹

"Tekeda [Ethiopia's deputy foreign minister] said cutting of the flow of money to Eritrea was essential. Particularly, remittances from the U.S. was a major source of funding for Eritrea, ... Having the UNSC firmly in support of the African Union and IGAD in condemning Eritrea would help the Eritrean community in the U.S. to justify diaspora non-payment of

⁷ US Embassy Addis Ababa (Ethiopia). Ethiopian Pm Considering Pro-active Options On Eritrea Mon, 30 Nov 2009. <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2009/11/09ADDISABABA2817.html>

⁸ Perlez, Jane. The New York Times, May 22, 2000.

⁹ US Embassy Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) Cable, Thu, 21 May 2009, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2009/05/09ADDISABABA1201.html>

taxes (2 percent of salary) to the Eritrean government. Currently, those who do not pay, Tekeda asserted, face imprisonment upon return, and imprisonment of family members living in Eritrea." (emphasis added)¹⁰

Look how the Ethiopian fabrication of "family members in Eritrea being denied food ration" it is this lie that morphed into "Eritrea shall cease using extortion, threats of violence, fraud and other illicit means to collect taxes outside of Eritrea from its nationals or other individuals of Eritrean descent," in the language of UNSC Resolution 2023 (2011). Make no mistake, the main target has never been the 2%, but also every voluntary remittance Eritrean Diaspora are willing to send home. That has been Susan Rice mission since 1998. Of course Eritreans have every legal and moral right to send their hard earned money home so that it could be used for educational, health care services, agricultural projects and infrastructural development; nothing more nothing less. Rice and company know this. It is an easily verifiable fact. However, development and peace in Eritrea is what they don't want to see. Eritrea, thanks to its own efforts, is freeing itself from dependence and handouts. Eritreans know well that dependency helps no one. If handouts helped anyone, Ethiopia would have been helped. She has been a perpetual recipient of billions of dollars of direct and indirect aid ever since the 1972-73 famine. But look at Ethiopia, a country that should have been a breadbasket of the Horn has been left to be a basket case when it comes to taking care of its own people. Diaspora Eritreans who help their own people, by sharing from the little they earned through the sweat of their brow, should be encouraged as a role model for others, definitely they do not deserve to be sanctioned.

So here we are, coming to another July, and the Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group (SEMG) is going to dish out another Report. As stated above and as usual, nothing credible can be expected from a Monitoring Group that has yet "to execute its responsibilities and mandate ... with professionalism, impartiality and objectivity." It is a Group "influenced by political considerations outside of its mandate." It is a political tool of some powerful members of the Security Council, members who want to save the Ethiopian government from its self-brought demise and to punish Eritrea for standing up to their puppet in Addis Ababa. In the words of Richard Reid, a British historian and a no friend of Eritrea:

"This is very distressing. Recently, I heard similar mutterings in the UK Foreign Office, that there have been correspondence passing across desks to the effect that it really would not have mattered what Eritrea would have done. Eritrea is going to be punished for this. Even though some voices in the UK Foreign Office [said] 'this is a disastrous idea, sanctions should not go ahead'. The push was coming from above somewhere. Ethiopia needs to be right. Ethiopia needs to be the stable center. Eritrea is now becoming, to be blunt, a pain in the ass. It will be punished. The same goes for the boundary Commission. I had heard similar stories that the US is actually an obstacle to the Boundary Commission. ... The US preferred Ethiopia. It preferred Ethiopia for all sorts of reasons. Eritrea was seen as a bunker state; they were less easy to control. Ethiopia had a more reliable military perhaps. Their policy was more directable and perhaps predictable. Whereas Eritrea from the mid 90s it was clear was seen unpredictable and couldn't be relied upon to do certain things that Washington might wanted to do. ... not only did the US not pressure Ethiopia but actually decided it was better to keep Eritrea at arm's length..." (emphasis added)¹¹

¹⁰ US Embassy Addis Ababa Cable, Mon, 22 June, 2009. <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2009/06/09ADDISABABA1450.html>

¹¹ Reid, Richard. Eritrea's External Relations. <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/eritreas-external-relations>.