

Uganda invades Sudan to prop up insurgents

by Linda de Hoyos

As of Oct. 26, a nearly full-scale war has broken out in East Africa, between Sudan and Uganda. While Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni was being feted in Washington by the World Bank, the General Command of Sudan reported on Oct. 28 that Ugandan "Army divisions, supported by tanks and armored vehicles," attacked the Sudanese Armed Forces at Forjok and Magwai, near the Ugandan-Sudan border, and succeeded in taking the town of Kapoeta in Sudan. Sudanese Foreign Minister Ali Osman Mohammad Taha told the press that the fighting in southern Sudan was "by all standards an open military invasion of Sudan." "The battle is still raging," stated the Sudan General Command.

The Ugandan government denied the report on Oct. 30, but Ugandan State radio pointed to fighting along the border, reporting that 5,000 Ugandans had fled the area.

The full-scale Ugandan invasion of Sudan is a desperate effort to prop up the forces of John Garang's Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA). After a decade of war, the SPLA is reportedly disintegrating politically and militarily, despite the best efforts of Baroness Lynda Chalker, British Minister of Overseas Development, and Baroness Caroline Cox, deputy speaker of the British House of Lords and director of Christian Solidarity International.

Now, President Museveni, who is personally close to Chalker, has stepped in directly with his National Resistance Army. Uganda has been the key on-the-ground logistical and military backer of the SPLA.

Since the end of last year, Britain has made assiduous efforts to isolate Khartoum. In December, Eritrea, whose President Assiyas Affreki has a long-standing friendship to both Garang and Museveni, broke relations with Sudan, at the behest of Uganda, according to sources. In April, Uganda officially severed relations, and threatened to incarcerate Sudan's diplomats in Entebbe. In June, Baroness Cox organized a conference in Eritrea, of all Sudanese oppositionists to the Khartoum government, which was attended by Garang and the American and British ambassadors to Eritrea, among others.

British intelligence then used the July 27 assassination attempt against Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to put the squeeze on Ethiopia to turn against Sudan. A week before Ugandan forces entered Sudan, Ethiopian President Meles Zenawi, otherwise an ally of the Khartoum government, arrived in Washington, to sport

his new-found hatred of Sudan. In an about-face from Ethiopian reports immediately after the attempted hit on Mubarak, Zenawi told the *Washington Times* on Oct. 21, "We know that the Sudanese government infiltrated in the equipment and that the planning for the attack took place in Khartoum."

There has been speculation that cash-strapped Ethiopia was forced to join the crusade against Sudan, or face an unofficial embargo from donors. In September, donors pledged aid to Ethiopia, and on Oct. 15, Italy announced \$45 million in aid. But Ethiopia, which sits at the top of the mineral-rich Great Rift Valley, has also sealed deals with the Canadian firm Golden Star Resources, the Swedish firm Boliden, and the U.S. Canyon Resources for exploration of its untapped gold reserves. The government is also looking for western investment in what it believes are major oil and gas reserves in the Ogaden and western Ethiopian Gambella Basin.

As for Museveni, as the Ugandan Army was invading Sudan with tanks and armored vehicles, he was hailed by John Hicks, deputy director of the U.S. Agency for International Development, as a model of "enlightened leadership" in Africa. The reason is clear: At a seminar of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, Museveni reaffirmed his commitment to privatization of Uganda's assets and an open door for foreign exploitation of his poverty-stricken country.



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