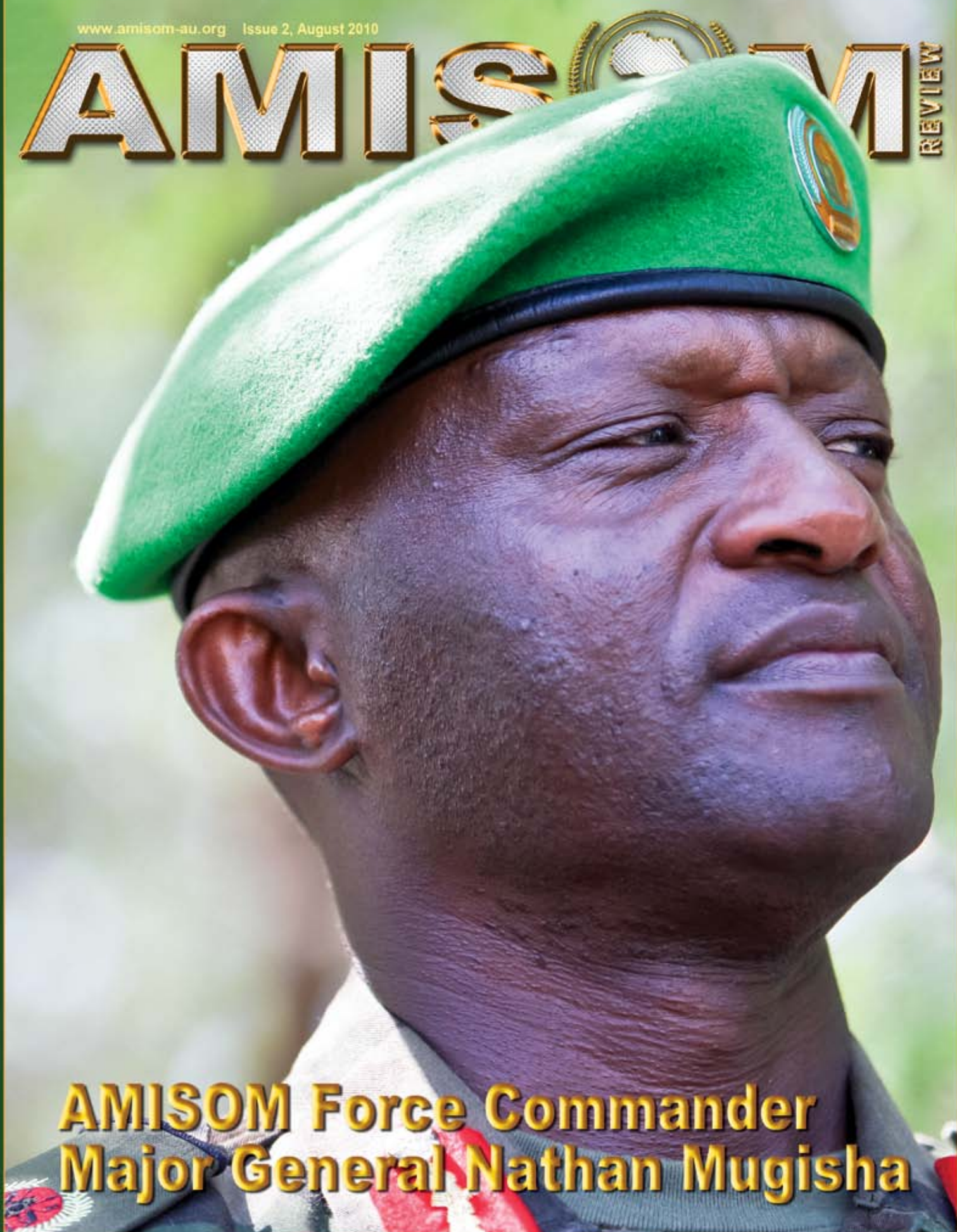


AMISOM REVIEW



**AMISOM Force Commander
Major General Nathan Mugisha**

Staying the Course

We cannot turn our backs on Somalia

By Amb. Boubacar Gaoussou Diarra, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and AMISOM Head of Mission

Reading the daily news coming out of Somalia, one may be tempted to join those calling for disengagement from what many see as the “failed state” of Somalia. After all, why support a country that for two decades now has failed to put its house in order? The answer to this somewhat baffling question lies in refocusing our attention on the people of Somalia.

While the debate continues as to whether or not Somalia is a failed state, the fact remains that 9 million Somalis are living in that state. This single fact must be the guiding force behind the world’s policies on Somalia. It is certainly the single most important element informing the African Union’s involvement in Somalia through its peacekeeping mission, AMISOM. We view all support to the Transitional Federal Government, which is part of our mandate, not as an end in itself but as a means to assist the Somali people, the ultimate targets of our endeavors. A partnership between the people of Somalia, the government of Somalia and the international community is really the most sustainable way to help Somalia. While the process continues of building the institutions that constitute the state, the Somali people must be assisted to live as normal a life as possible.

Why is this so critical? The growing infiltration of foreign extremists into Somalia raises the specter of

an even more complex and more protracted conflict than at first appeared to be the case. There is increasing evidence of the presence of foreign extremists in the country. In May, a top al-Qaeda commander was reported killed in Somalia. There is rising concern that this phenomenon poses a threat to regional and international peace.

But we need to understand that the bigger threat is first and foremost to the Somali people, who now live under constant threat to their lives. The extremists’ menu for the people of Somalia keeps unfolding like a horror film, except that this is real life: Threats against and assassination of anyone they think does not support their agenda; assassination of journalists as a way to intimidate them into either silence or collaboration; the murder of civilians at their most vulnerable moments, be it students at a graduation ceremony, patients waiting for treatment at a hospital or people praying at the mosque.

Moreover, the extremists are denying the Somali people simple pleasures that other people around the world enjoy as a right, including music and dance, which the extremists say is taboo. Their desecration of Somali shrines violates the people’s right to

pay respect to their dead. Claiming to be the defenders of Islam, the extremists are committing acts that are totally against Islam and against Somali culture. Their agenda? To make sure that Somalia degenerates into total disorder, which would allow the country to serve as a base for their international terrorist agenda. If we disengage from Somalia, we shall be leaving the people of Somalia to fight this international war on our behalf.

This is not the time to distance ourselves from Somalia. On the contrary, it is exactly the time to rally behind the people of that country who are faced with the double threat of Somali extremists fighting to take power through terror and international extremists bent on using Somalia to carry out an international terrorist agenda. We owe it to the Somali people to help them deal with these challenges. So we must make them close partners in whatever we do, recognizing that progress in Somalia will come only if the Somali people participate in the process to rebuild Somalia.

Issues of security constitute a major challenge to life, especially in Mogadishu. AMISOM recognizes this. One of the mission’s major tasks is to assist in the provision of national security by strengthening the pillars of the state, which comprise the transitional government, the military and the police. First, we do this by providing support to the Transitional Federal Institutions in their

efforts to stabilize Somalia and promote dialogue and reconciliation. Second, we work to develop security by providing training to both the police and the military. Additionally, the mission interacts directly with the Somali people by providing free purified drinking water as well as free medical services, treating around 12,000 outpatients monthly.

All these activities complement AMISOM’s support to the Djibouti peace process, an aspect of which is to encourage the TFG to reach out to other political players in Somalia. Earlier this year, AMISOM was instrumental in the signing of the agreement between the TFG and Ahlu Sunna Wal Jammah in Addis Ababa. These activities constitute the essence of the partnership between AMISOM, the transitional government and the people of Somalia. And June’s conference in Istanbul focusing on development and reconstruction was an opportunity for the international community to reaffirm its commitment to help the people of Somalia as well. Let us not entertain calls for disengagement of whatever type. For disengagement today will mean reengagement tomorrow.

A version of this article first appeared in the East African May 31, 2010





Contents *August 2010*

		IN THE NEWS
<i>Roundup</i>	4	Highlights of the recent months
		SPOTLIGHT
<i>Golden Jubilee</i>	6	Somalia marks its 50th anniversary
<i>Youthful Thinking</i>	7	AMISOM encourages young Somalis to work for peace
<i>Gaining Strength</i>	8	IGAD pledges 2,000 extra troops
<i>High Praise</i>	9	UN Istanbul conference praises AMISOM
<i>Division in the Ranks</i>	10	AMISOM hospital provides desperately needed treatments
		REPORTS FROM THE FIELD
<i>Essay</i>	11	Wafula Wamunyinyi on protecting Somali civilians
<i>Front Line</i>	12	New Ugandan commander takes to the field
<i>New Guard</i>	13	AMISOM modernizes Somali police force
<i>Super Heated</i>	14	Meet the Mogadishu firefighters
<i>Taking Wing</i>	15	AMISOM air traffic controllers keep skies safe
<i>Photo Gallery</i>	16	Peacekeepers on Duty
<i>School Days</i>	18	AMISOM education initiative takes off
<i>Training Up</i>	19	A look at AMISOM's military instructors
<i>Fighting Force</i>	20	Newly trained Somalia forces gather strength
<i>Seaworthy</i>	21	AMISOM maritime unit hits the waves
<i>Place of Refuge</i>	22	AMISOM areas offering sanctuary for Somalis
<i>Essay</i>	23	Capt. Chris Magezi on confronting armed groups
		PROFILES
<i>On Duty</i>	24	Portraits of our brave men and women in AMISOM
		MOGADISHU JOURNAL
<i>Essay</i>	27	Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke on international support
<i>Football Mania</i>	28	World Cup fanfare grips Mogadishu
<i>History of a Nation</i>	29	Radio Mogadishu archives hold national treasure
<i>Civil Service</i>	30	Aiming high at work with the TFG
		BACK COVER

Publisher: Information Department of the African Union Mission in Somalia

Managing Editor: Gaffel G. Nkolokosa
Spokesperson: Major Barigye Ba-Hoku
Field Reports: Lt Col Adolphe Manirakiza / Capt Chris Magezi
P.O Box 20182 – 00200, Nairobi, Kenya

Website: www.amisom-au.org

Photos: Stuart Price
Design/Layout: Zvezdan Djukanovic
Editorial Assistance: AU/UN Information Support Team
Phone: +254 202 713 755 /56 /58 Fax: +254 202 713 766

Email: amisomhom@gmail.com

■ Team Building

Somali President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed met the new Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General Dr. Augustine Mahiga July 25 in Kampala, Uganda, on the sidelines of the recent AU summit there. President Sharif and the top UN diplomat discussed an array of issues related to Somalia, touching on the humanitarian crisis, security challenges and political and diplomatic developments. Dr. Mahiga assured the president that the international community remained committed to the Somalia government.



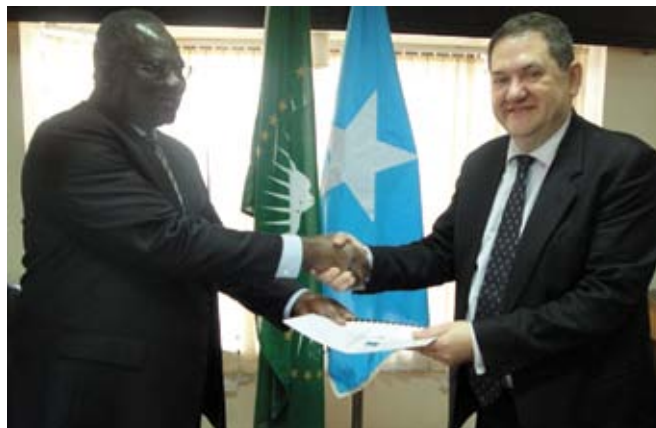
■ Presidential Diplomacy

The Somali President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed met July 19 in Rome with Italian foreign Minister Franco Frattini. The two officials discussed the best ways to strengthen the close relationship between Somalia and Italy. Italy has announced plans to train 1,000 Somali police officers and pledged 5 million euros for various development projects.

■ Deepening Ties

The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia Ambassador Boubacar Gaousou Diarra signed a Memorandum of Agreement July 16 in Nairobi with the United Nations Office for Project Services

(UNOPS) regarding the transfer of funds made available by the Italian Government for UNOPS to provide services to the Somalia TFG. The signing of the memorandum was witnessed by the Italian ambassador to Somalia, H.E. Dejak Stefano.



■ New Faces

Somali President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed swore in eight new government ministers July 11 at a ceremony in Villa Somalia, Mogadishu. Among the ministers who took the oath of office were the former speaker of the parliament, Shekh Aden Mohamd Nur, who is now the deputy prime minister and minister of ports. Ahmed Abdisalam Haji Adan has taken on the post of minister of national security, and Mohamad Jirde Hussein is the new minister of health. Yusuf Gelle Ugas is the new minister of public works. Hussein Warsame Samatar has taken over the role of minister of reconciliation. Mohamed Omar Dalha (former deputy speaker) is now the minister of re-education

and social services. Abdinur Mo'allim Mohamoud has taken over as minister of education. Omar Ali Roble is the new head of the ministry of demobilization of militias, and Yusuf Hassan Ibrahim is the new minister of foreign affairs.



■ Spot Assessment

The head of the African Union's Peace Support Operations Division, Sivuyile Bam, in June paid a rare visit to Mogadishu for an assessment of the AU's peacekeeping efforts there. Mr. Bam and his entourage were received at the Mogadishu International Airport by AMISOM Force Commander Maj. Gen. Nathan Mugisha and other senior AMISOM military officers. While briefing the delegation in his office, the force commander expressed his gratitude and called for more such visits in the future, saying they would enhance strategic planning.



■ Deploying Online

AMISOM has launched its official website, part of an effort by the AU peacekeeping mission to provide timely information on its activities in Somalia. The site, www.amisom-au.org, went live in June, and a Somali version will soon be added. The site contains sections on AMISOM's structure and personnel, key documents relating to its mandate as well as a media center, where journalists can access the mission's publications and press releases and apply for AMISOM accreditation. The activities section highlights the work peacekeepers do to help ordinary Somalis such as establishing schools, providing medical services and training the Somali police force. There are also links

to AMISOM's Flickr page where one can view pictures of Mogadishu (which is far from the barren wasteland one would expect after 20 years of conflict).

■ Boots on the Ground

A high-level meeting in Addis Ababa in early June praised the role of the African Union Mission in Somalia and asked African countries, especially those that have pledged troops to AMISOM, to speedily deploy their contingents. The meeting of Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) was held at the AU headquarters on June 2 and chaired by the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security Ambassador Ramtane Lama-mra. It was attended by the ministers of defense of Burundi

and Uganda, the two countries currently providing most troops to AMISOM, as well as the state minister of interior of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of Somalia and representatives from Ethiopia, Malawi, Djibouti, Nigeria, the European Union and Permanent Members of the UN Security Council.

■ Advance Team

Seven senior officials from Malawi's Ministry of Defense visited Mogadishu in May on behalf of the Chair of the African Union President Dr. Bingu wa Mutharika of Malawi and were hugely impressed by the joint efforts of AMISOM and the Somali government. The delegation was led by Patrick Kachimera, Malawi's defense secretary. He was accompanied by the deputy chief of staff of the Malawian defense forces and senior officers from the police force. The group met with senior Somali government and AMISOM officials, including AMISOM Force Commander Maj. Gen. Nathan Mugisha. "We are here for a fact-finding mission," Kachimera said after the team spent a day in Mogadishu.



In Figures

\$1 billion

Estimated amount in U.S. dollars of remittances from the Somali diaspora going into Somalia annually

\$390 million

Rough amount in U.S. dollars spent by private investors in Somalia's rapidly growing telecommunications sector

1.5 million

Mobile phone lines in Somalia

14

Telecommunication companies operating in Somalia

2 million

Internet users in Somalia

50

Percentage of all camels in African found inside Somalia

65

Percentage of Somalis who earn a living in the livestock trade

300,000

Estimated amount in metric tons of Somalia's sustainable annual marine fisheries production

Somalis cheer 50th anniversary of nation's independence



Somali women donning the national flag in Mogadishu

By Guled Mohamed

Golden Jubilee

Thousands of Somalis in eastern African and around the world joined together in celebrations June 26, Somalia's 50th anniversary. The normally quiet streets of central Nairobi, home to a large Somali community, burst into life as the celebrants clad in the sky blue colors of their national flag made their way to a showy event organized by the Somali embassy in Kenya. The crowd of youthful Somalis, many of whom have never known peace in their country, packed the 3,000 capacity city hall building in the heart of Nairobi.

When the Somali national anthem blared over the huge loudspeakers, Somalis in attendance for the Nairobi celebration stood and sung along, proudly waving the Somali flag. It was an emotional moment, and many wept. The popular Wayaayahacub (New

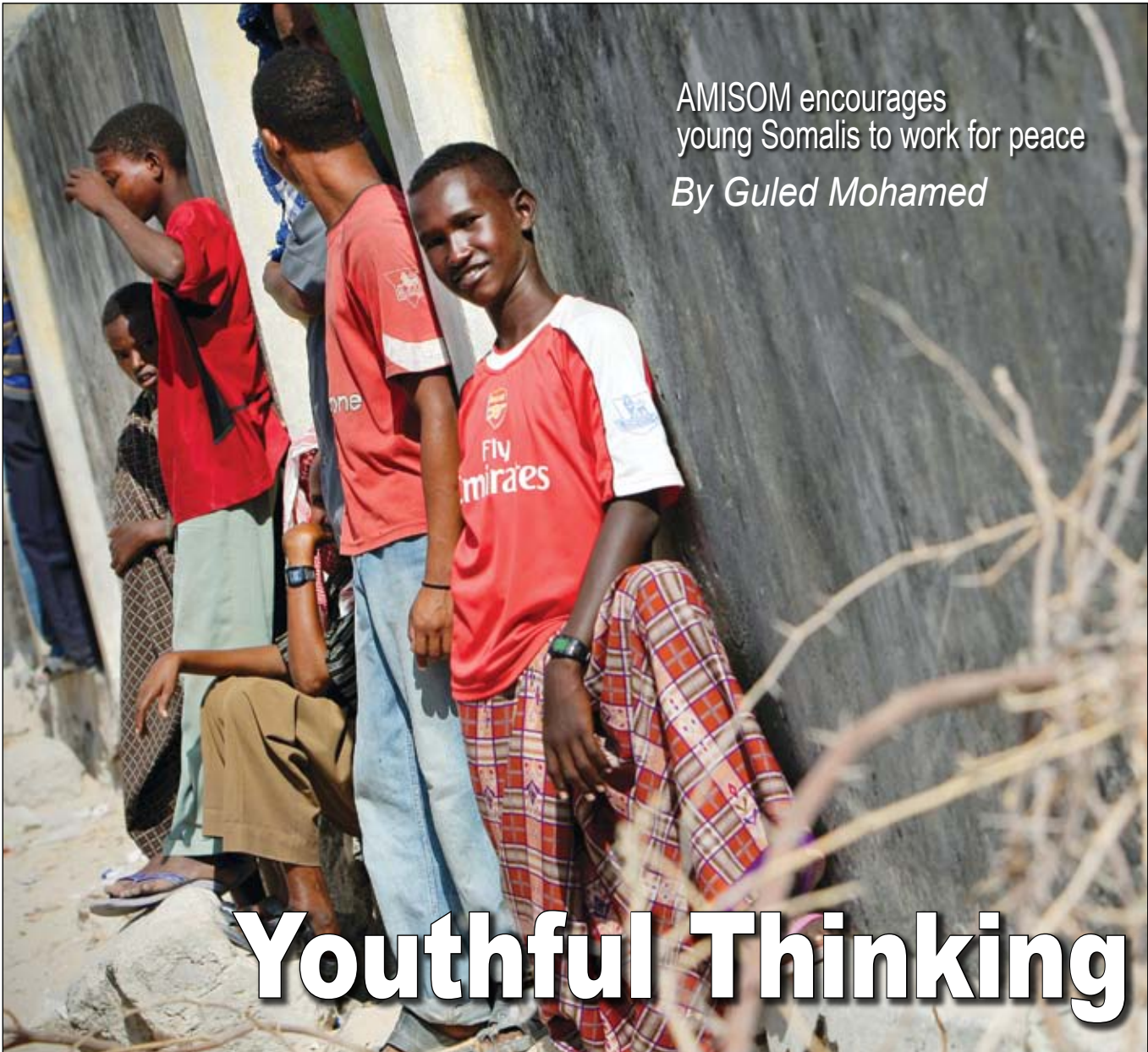
generation) Somali band led dozens of other Somali musicians and poets in entertaining and educating the colorful throng as chants of "Long live Somalia!" reverberated around in the packed hall.

The Nairobi event was graced by dignitaries, including the Italian envoy to Somalia Stefano Dejak, Somalia's Foreign Affairs Minister Ali Ahmed Jama and Justice Minister Abdirahman Janaqow as well as the Somali Ambassador to Kenya Mohamed Ali Nur. All were united in one message: "Enough is enough, we are tired of the violence and we want peace in our country."

Five decades prior, on June 26, 1960, British Somaliland gained independence, and the former Italian Somaliland did so as well five days later. On July 1, 1960, the two territories united to form the Somali Republic.

However, since the ousting of Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991, the Somali population has endured two decades of internal strife.

Like millions of his countrymen scattered all over the world, 22-year-old Liban Ali Haji has had to endure family separation after fleeing fighting in Somalia. Yet his heart remains at home in Somalia nonetheless. "I love my country and flag," said Haji, who draped himself in a Somali flag for the celebrations in Nairobi. "That is why I closed my shop early to take part in this 50th anniversary celebration. My mother is in Norway, and my father is in Canada. My six siblings are equally divided between Oslo and Toronto. We have really suffered because of this violence, and I can't wait to go back to Somalia and enjoy my freedom and help rebuild my country." ■



AMISOM encourages
young Somalis to work for peace
By Guled Mohamed

Youthful Thinking

AMISOM's Civil Military Unit (CIMIC) and the Mogadishu mission's Civil Affairs Unit organized a youth workshop Aug. 9 for over 30 Somali youngsters, an event meant to encourage them to form an umbrella organization and actively take part in the ongoing Somali peace process. More than 30 youths attended, mostly hailing from the relatively quiet districts of Dharkenley and Wadajir. The majority of youths were roughly 18 years old -- meaning they had lived their entire lives without knowing Somalia to have a working government or enduring peace.

"You are a very important entity of the society," said Colonel Micheal Ondoga, the

Uganda contingent commander, speaking to fully packed hall at the main AMISOM base.

"If you want to live in peace in your country and get an education and ultimately a better life you need to now invest in peace. You are the strongest physically. Please use your energy and power in a constructive way and spread the message of peace to Somalia and other districts of Mogadishu so that they can also enjoy the relative peace you have in Dharkenley and Wadajir districts. I wish to also congratulate you for working with your district authorities and helping make your areas peaceful."

Armed opposition groups in Somalia routinely conscript Somali youths, pressing them

into armed combat against the Somali Transitional Government and AU peacekeepers.

"As youths we have suffered and have been used by anti-peace groups like al-Shabab and Hizbulul Islam to kill, maim and displace our own mothers, siblings and relatives," said Somali-Canadian youth leader Jama Said Korshel. "We have said enough is enough and wish to tell the foreign fighters who are leading the unholy and unpopular war in our country to leave us alone. Whatever they are propagating is not Islam, and we will not rest until we make sure all the youths they have brainwashed and who continue to fight for them understand the gravity of their action." ■



Gaining Strength

IGAD promises more peacekeepers

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a regional development body comprising of six countries from eastern Africa, has expressed concern over the situation in Somalia and resolved to strengthen the African Union peacekeeping force in the country. In a communiqué issued July 5 following two days of deliberations in Addis Ababa, the 15th Extraordinary IGAD Heads of State Summit resolved to strengthen AU Peacekeeping Mission in Somalia with an extra 2,000 troops and called upon the African Union Commission to mobilize the necessary resources, logistics and equipment for the deployment.

The assembled leaders who took the decision included President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni of Uganda, Omar Al-Bashir of Sudan, Ismael Omar Guelleh of Djibouti, Mwai Kibaki of Kenya, Sheikh Sharif Ahmed of Somalia and Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia. The news of the decision could not have come at a better time for the African

Union peacekeepers already in Somalia. More than 6,000 troops from Uganda and Burundi are currently serving in AMISOM,

roughly 2,000 less than the mandated strength. Despite their limited numbers, AMISOM forces have bravely soldiered on supporting the people of Somalia and their government. Nearly 100 AMISOM peacekeepers have lost their lives since the force deployed three years ago.

The IGAD leaders also noted the deteriorating security situation in Somalia which poses a serious threat to the region and the international community at large. They vowed to “work with all parties including AMISOM and UN Security Council” to raise 20,000 primarily Somali troops to be deployed throughout the country, with neighboring countries providing the necessary resources and equipment.

AMISOM has been deployed in Somalia since June 2007, making it the longest serving peacekeeping mission in the country since the ouster of the last central government in 1991. The country’s main airport, seaport and presidential palace are protected by the peacekeepers, who are also training the nascent Somali security forces to eventually take over responsibility for security. ■



High Praise

UN Istanbul conference
on Somalia lauds AMISOM

The UN Istanbul Conference on Somalia held in May voiced praise for AMISOM peacekeeping efforts, saying in a formal declaration that AU forces were playing a vital role in bringing peace and stability to the troubled country.

Hosted by the Turkish government May 21 to 23, the UN conference formally noted with satisfaction in its closing declaration the continuing increase in the number of trained Somali recruits, as well as recent senior military appointments in the TFG. It commended the contributing countries and organizations, including AMISOM, for providing training to the Somalia security forces and appealed for the expeditious disbursement of pledges made at the Brussels Pledging Conference in April 2009. The conference declaration also called on other African countries to provide troops to AMISOM to enable it to reach its fully mandated strength.

The conference declaration also paid tribute to the progress made by the TFG, as illustrated by its agreement with Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a and security and cooperation accords with the Puntland region. It also lauded the efforts of IGAD and the Arab League, especially the latter's decision to convene a conference on boosting early recovery activities for Somalia. And the Istanbul conference declaration further welcomed a proposal by the Islamic Development Bank to bring together development partners and agencies to respond to Somalia's critical needs.

The conference declaration reiterated the commitment of leading

nations and international agencies to improve the lives and security of the Somali people by fostering reconciliation, human rights and good governance. It promised to increase access to basic services and initiate reconstruction activities with the goal of setting the war-ravaged country firmly on the path to peace and sustainable development.

The private sector was also asked to play its part at the conference, which highlighted the role the business community has to play in helping Somalia. The conference called for investment in the six priority areas identified by the TFG and the business community: telecommunications; transport infrastructure; livestock exports; fisheries; banking and remittances; and alternative energy. In particular, conference organizers stressed the need for funds needed to complete construction of the Bossaso and Garowe airports.

The conference delegates agreed going forward to work towards concrete action plans which would include identifying pilot projects for private-public investment with a view to creating economic zones in Somalia. With regard to the scourge of piracy off Somalia's coast, the conference expressed appreciation for the assistance being provided by the United Nations and other international organizations and donors to enhance the capacity of the judicial and the corrections systems in Somalia, Kenya, Seychelles and other states in the region who have begun prosecuting piracy cases. ■

A wounded fighter from an armed opposition group recovers at an AMISOM medical facility in Mogadishu

Rifts among insurgents
could help peace process

Division in the Ranks

The International Crisis Group issued a new report May 18 saying Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) must engage dissidents among the country's insurgent groups in order to strengthen its authority and combat al-Qaeda inspired extremists.

The ICG report, titled "Somalia's Divided Extremists," reviews the religious, ideological and clan rifts that have developed between the country's main Islamist factions since the election of Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed as leader of the TFG. It concludes that the government must reach out to elements of Harakat al-Shabab al-Mujahideen (the Mujahideen Youth Movement) that are disenchanted with the influence of foreign jihadis in the group and the al-Qaeda sympathies among its leadership. The report also suggests that many in the Somali nationalist Hizbulul al-Islam (Islamic Party) could be more receptive to TFG overtures.

"The mounting internal divisions within

the insurgency have given the TFG, the UN and donors many opportunities to reach out to less hard-line elements," said Crisis Group Horn of Africa Analyst Rashid Abdi. "With the right approach and incentives, some might accept a peaceful settlement."

Somalis have historically accepted many interpretations of Islam, most of them moderate. But starting in the 1960s and fuelled by the country's instability and poverty, as well as cash from Saudi Wahhabist groups, extremists began to gain ground. Islamist briefly seized power in 2006 but were defeated by invading Ethiopian troops. When the Ethiopians withdrew in early 2009, a moderate Islamist coalition took power and committed to implementing Sharia (Islamic law). The jihadis, caught off guard by the move, denounced the regime as a puppet of the West, but cracks have since formed in the Islamist insurgency.

Al-Shabab leadership's disregard for Somali nationalism and clan loyalties have

put it at odds with Hizbul al-Islam's commanders, according to the ICG report. Open hostilities have broken out between the two movements. To use this division to its advantage, Somalia's government needs to both improve its military capabilities and win the hearts and minds of clan leaders and impressionable young Somalis, the report said. The United Nations and donor countries also must realize that the failure to reach out to dissident Islamists only empowers the hardliners to continue their recruitment and attacks on the feeble government, according to findings of the ICG study.

"If the foreign jihadis fend off their local challengers, al-Shabab's rapid transformation into a wholly al-Qaeda franchise might become irreversible," said ICG Africa Project Director François Grignon. "That could cause havoc even well beyond Somalia's borders, and the TFG and the international community cannot choose to be bystanders." ■

Caring for Civilians

How AMISOM works to help and protect the people of Mogadishu

By Wafula Wamunyinyi

Deputy Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia

In recent years, the civilian population of Mogadishu has been caught in the midst of fighting between government forces, supported by troops from the African Union peace-keeping force (AMISOM), and extremists aiming to destroy the Somali reconciliation effort and turn the country into a base for plotting terrorist attacks throughout the world. Many have sadly lost their lives or been forced to flee. AMISOM is extremely concerned about any civilian deaths arising from exchanges with the insurgents. For us, the loss of even a single Somali life is highly regrettable -- whether deliberately at the hands of armed opposition groups or inadvertently from AMISOM shelling of extremists' hideouts. However, much of the criticism leveled against AMISOM regarding civilian casualties fails to describe the context in which our forces operate.

The omission of this key information, as Chris Harnisch, an analyst for the Critical Threats Project at the American

Enterprise Institute rightly says, results in a misrepresentation of our brave soldiers in Somalia and the work they do in an extremely challenging environment. AMISOM's mandate provides for the defense of key government infrastructure and the facilitation of humanitarian aid delivery. While this prevents AMISOM from going on the offensive, it has not stopped groups such as al-Shabab deliberately targeting our troops and forcing AMISOM to respond. Given the extremists' strategy of using civilians as a human shield behind which to perpetrate their attacks, this response regrettably entails risk to the population.

Across the world, civilian casualties are an unfortunate consequence of any battle against a terrorist insurgency in a built-up area. Sacrificing civilians for the sake of protecting our forces is, however, not an option. That would not only be morally indefensible but also counterproductive, alienating the population. Therefore, AMISOM is doing everything possible to avoid such casualties. We have strengthened efforts to improve firing discipline among AMISOM peacekeepers on the ground in Mogadishu. Two ongoing training programs conducted by France, the United States and the United Kingdom are

putting battle groups through rigorous training and teaching new tactics to reduce the threat of collateral damage, including urban warfare simulations in an environment mimicking the narrow streets and alleys of Mogadishu.

While AMISOM makes every attempt to investigate reports of civilian casualties, the conditions in Mogadishu are such that it is very difficult to verify who has done what. Furthermore, our capacity to do so is at the moment hampered by the volatile security situation and resource constraints. The

lack of proper investigation however means that most information is based on hearsay and insurgent propaganda, which is always quick to portray our troops as shelling civilian areas indiscriminately. What is certain, though, is that despite our best efforts the insurgents' tactics deliberately place some civilians in harm's way. For this reason, AMISOM has set up a medical facility in Mogadishu offering free medi-

cal treatment to all civilians, regardless of their political views and whether or not they belong to armed opposition groups.

In addition, our troops provide 60,000 liters a day of safe drinking water to the people of Mogadishu and freely share their rations with any who come to AMISOM seeking food. In these and other ways, we are trying to alleviate the suffering of the people of Somalia.

However, much more can be done. With greater assistance from the international community, we can build up these and other capacities. As in Iraq and Afghanistan, a population-centric approach requires a sufficient number of troops to secure the areas where the Somali people live. An increase in AMISOM troop numbers would make this possible.

Over the course of the last decade, the Somali people have made great strides towards achieving national reconciliation. The institutions in Mogadishu are testament to this. We in AMISOM do not seek to add to their burdens. On the contrary, we are committed to supporting them on their journey and to stand with them against those who, through violence, seek to subvert the popular will. ■

Versions of this article appeared in the New Vision and the Daily Nation



Somali civilians receiving medical treatment at an AMISOM facility



Frontline

New Ugandan field commander takes the fight to the enemy

By Guled Mohamed

As of July 22, Mogadishu had witnessed weeks of renewed conflict after armed opposition groups fighting to topple the internationally recognized Transitional Federal Government of Somalia tried to overrun TFG positions in the heart of the city.

Col. Michael Ondoga, the new Ugandan contingent commander, spent several days leading his troops to help the TFG repulse al-Shabab fighters threatening the safety of the hill-top presidential palace. The enemy fighters also seemed intent on cutting off two new strategic locations occupied by AMISOM peacekeepers in northern and eastern Mogadishu.

Ondoga says al-Shabab fighters had crossed the red line manned by government forces to lob mortars and fire automatic rifles towards the Villa Somalia Presidential palace that is home to President Sheikh Sharif of Somalia.

The al-Shabab assault could no longer be tolerated, because their foray further into government-controlled areas of Mogadishu was also threatening to cut off two recently retaken AMISOM positions on key high ground overlooking the airport and seaport. As expected the confrontation was not easy. Fighting went for days in the Bondere district, where AMISOM troops and TFG forces clashed with hardened militants.

“Since I took over on 18th of June, the opposition forces have been threatening to

overrun our defence lines in north and east of Mogadishu,” Ondogo said. “On 19th July they pushed back the TFG and were just 800 metres from the State House, and so we had to push them back. The opposition forces cannot move forward. I think we have done a great job. But now we are holding our lines in Bondere and Shibis districts. Every conflict comes with its casualties. Both AMISOM and the TFG have had a few casualties.”

Having just replaced Col. Tumusiime Katigazi, who has finished his deployment mission and is back in Uganda, Ondogo urges the TFG to maximize the AMISOM support in order to better help the Somali people, who have endured nearly 20 years of conflict since the 1991 ouster of the last central government.

“I met with the mayor of Mogadishu,” Ondogo said. “He has a good vision and work plan to clear the city of garbage heaps so that the town is clean. He also wants to improve on medical care and road network, and we promised we will assist him as AMISOM. Our mandate is difficult but manageable. As we support the TFG, they have to take advantage of the support. Because of our support there are reduced cases of airport and seaport shelling by the opposition forces. The number of suicide bombers and cases of Improvised Explosive Devices, IEDs, has drastically reduced. The city is generally safer than it was some time back.”

Ahmed Mohamed, a 39-year-old jobless

father of seven children who lives in Bondere, says he had been displaced four times before in Wardhigley district by al-Shabab, whom he accuses of using the population as human shields.

“The fighting in Bondere has raged for days now,” said Mohamed, who spoke by phone from his home as sounds of fighting shook the streets outside. “I have not left the house for five days with my children. We are sheltering from the fighting. Bullets and mortars are flying around. It’s very dangerous to move out. We have no option but to remain indoors until the fighting subsides. If this time I relocate it will be the fourth time in eight months. I blame al-Shabab, because it’s them who normally start the war.”

Ondogo has experienced other conflicts back home in Uganda, as well as in Sudan and as far as the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic, where Ugandan forces are in hot pursuit of the notorious warlord Joseph Kony. However, the ruthlessness of armed opposition groups in Mogadishu has surprised even him.

“The opposition forces are not very accurate in targeting our positions with their mortars,” Ondogo said. “They often miss us, and the mortars land on civilian populations like recently in Hamarweyne district, where children were unfortunately killed. I wish to urge the public to keep off from hostile areas and wherever fighting starts, because it is the only way they can be safe.” ■



New Guard

AMISOM modernizes Somali police force

Seven AMISOM police instructors have embarked on training Somali police officers in skills and techniques that are expected to revolutionize the Somali police force and help it better protect the civilian population.

Inducted on Feb. 14, 2010, the AMISOM instructors are seasoned senior police officers from Uganda, Nigeria, Ghana and Sierra Leone with a mandate to train and professionalize the force. It is the most recent attempt to revive the unit, which dissolved in 1991 with the collapse of the last central government in Somalia.

The first batch of 19 Somali officers are being trained in evidence handling, firearms and ballistics at the Mine Action School, a United Nations affiliated anti-mine training center located at the main AMISOM base in southern Mogadishu.

Taiwo Kasumu, the AMISOM police spokesman and a deputy police superintendent from Nigeria, said the training is suited

to the unique challenges police officers in Somalia face. “The training will give the police officers necessary expertise to handle the ever-increasing Improvised Explosives Devices (IEDs) that have become the weapon of choice for the opposition forces fighting the Somali interim government,” Kasumu said.

A recent IED blast at the General Kahiye training college in Mogadishu’s Hamarjabab district killed at least seven police officers and wounded several others. In the future, such incidents could be drastically reduced with the ballistics training that the AMISOM trainers are offering.

“We need to teach Somali police officers to deal with explosives and the handling of explosives related exhibits,” Kasumu said. “They also need to know when a police officer is justified to use his firearm. We are vigorously dealing with these issues at the moment. The trainees are very interactive in class and have a huge desire to learn.”

Working in a country that has had no ef-

fective central rule for 20 years comes with special challenges, the biggest of which is the impersonation of officers. Relatives of deceased police officers have been known to falsely present themselves in place of their dead kinsmen, apparently to collect pay. According to Kasumu, a few such cases have already been detected, and AMISOM police are closely working with their Somali colleagues to end the practice. AMISOM is creating a database of all serving police officers linking bio-data, fingerprints and pictures.

“We have found out that there are a few cases of impersonation or deceit by kinsmen of deceased police officers,” Kasumu said. “This is a very serious issue. The Somali police commissioner, Brig. Gen. Ali Loyan and his AMISOM counterpart, Police Commissioner Hudson Benu, have set up a committee to carry out an in-house inquiry on this issue. In no distant time, a comprehensive list of Somali police force personnel will be submitted to AMISOM.” ■

Hot Stuff

Meet the Mogadishu firefighters and rescue team

By Guled Mohamed



It is hard to believe Mogadishu has lacked professional, well equipped fire fighters since the collapse of the central government in 1991. However, that is now history thanks largely to AMISOM, which has fielded a special firefighting and rescue unit in the Somali capital.

Based at the Mogadishu airport, the firefighting rescue team is led by an enthusiastic young man named Aziz Mustafa, the acting AMISOM chief firefighter. The 18-man unit has also helped train four Somali firefighters and hopes to recruit others who will take over from them in the future.

“Our duty is to save lives and minimize damage on properties caused by fire,” Mustafa said. “We mostly deal with aircraft fires, structural fires and fuel fires. We have the capacity to deal with any fire accidents and are really proud to be the first firefighters and rescue team Mogadishu has had since the collapse of the government.”

Their equipment includes two rapid intervention firefighting trucks, with each one carrying 8,000 liters of water, 1,000 liters of foam and 250 kilograms of dry charcoal powder. The team is trained to battle any kind of fire with the help of the above three sprays.

The life savers have worked in Mogadishu for the last 11 months and have managed to battle three fires. The first blaze struck a fuel depot with storage capacity of over 1.8 million liters. It took the firefighters five hours to put out the raging blaze and save 120,000 liters of fuel. Fortunately they were no casualties involved. The other two fires successfully doused were at the AMISOM fuel station on December 25, 2009 and at the seaport, where they saved a ship carrying charcoal that caught fire four months ago. Luckily for them, they were also no casualties involved in the two other incidents. Mustafa said the team has a good record of battling fires in areas under AMISOM control but struggles to respond to incidents in wider Mogadishu because of the security situation.

“Sometimes little fires are caused by the explosions, but we cannot immediately rush to the scene because our bomb experts have to clear the area and we will also need security,” Mustafa said. “It’s really challenging to save lives in such an environment, but we have no option but to do what we can in order to minimize the suffering for our Somali brothers.” ■

AMISOM is training about six Somali air traffic controllers at the Mogadishu international airport, where they are to keep watch from the control tower. The newly commissioned controllers will be Somalia's first such team since the collapse of the central government in 1991.

Trainees are learning how to communicate with planes arriving at the airport as well as those departing from Mogadishu. They grab their microphones whenever a pilot calls in through the VHF radio murmuring aviation terminologies. When a call comes in, the controllers immediately begin putting down the directions they have just given the pilot on a pink strip of paper. These trainees have been threatened in vain by opposition forces and have even lost a colleague who was gruesomely murdered by militants, but their desire to continue directing air traffic into and out of Mogadishu remains undeterred.

Their AMISOM trainer, Joseph Mark Magezi from Uganda, is happy with his apprentices. He has been training them for ten months and says they are ready to be dispatched to Nairobi or Kampala for further training in busier airports subject to availability of funds.

"I have seen them improve in phraseology, the communication with pilots," said Magezi, the AMISOM senior air traffic management officer. "We have managed to also improve in the overall coordination with the aerodrome that is the runway, apron and other areas of the airport for the safety of people. Communications between the tower, the security forces and our colleagues on the ground have also improved since we improvised the VHF radios."

Magezi's trainees are grateful for the instruction. "Our work is to communicate with the various planes landing at the airport," said one of the trainees, who declined to give his name. "We tell them about the overall security of the airport, give them weather updates and also assign them the runway to land or fly out of the airport. It's an exciting job. We love it in spite of the threats. AMISOM has been training us and we can only thank them."

In future when peace is finally realized in Somalia, the six trainees will be running the show at the air traffic control center. They are hopeful that the tower will get the necessary equipments it needs, like a radar system that will be monitoring their country's airspace, which is currently being controlled from Nairobi. ■



Taking Wing

AMISOM air traffic controllers keep skies safe

By Guled Mohamed





AMISOM Front Scene





on Duty
tline
nes



School Days

AMISOM education initiative takes off

By Guled Mohamed

Student enrollment is rapidly outpacing expectations at an AMISOM pilot school project meant to encourage parents of Jazeera village in southern Mogadishu to bring their children for free primary education. Initially just nine students signed up for the program. Within 30 days the school roster had 97 names, and now 210 students are enrolled.

The parents have not been left behind either. Many adults have registered themselves to take advantage of the free public education, which has been absent in Somalia for the last 20 years since the ouster of former president Mohamed Siad Barre. The latest AMISOM programme marks a step by the peacekeeping mission to battle illiteracy in Somalia. Statistics on Somalia's literacy rate are scant, but one estimate by UNICEF says just 24 percent of females between the age of 15 and 24 can read in the country.

Education became a luxury after Barre was deposed, leaving many poor Somalis like the people of Jazeera and their children uneducated. Now the education-hungry villagers and their children are posing challenges to AMISOM, which is struggling to provide them with books, desks and other educational materials. Despite the lack of supplies, students are eager to attend class. Hani Ahmed, a 9-year-old girl, is elated by the opportunity to attend the start-up school, which has yet to be named.

"We did not have a school around before this was opened," she said. "This school was started by elders and AMISOM. I learn English and the Quran at the moment. The school is free. We don't pay anything. I want to study hard in order to get a job when I finish school."

Located in the expansive Wadajir district of southern Mogadishu, the population of Jazeera has sharply risen over the years as many civilians flee violence in other parts of the chaotic capital. Security in the area is better than other parts of Mogadishu in large part due to the presence of the Jazeera train-



ing camp, where AMISOM peacekeepers train Somali government forces.

Due to lack of resources the students of Jazeera school have been forced to study in a refurbished former sweets factory. During the morning children attend classes on the Quran, English, mathematics and geography, while parents and other adult learners attend similar classes in the afternoon.

Funds are in short supply too. "We urge well-wishers to support us," said Abdullahi Ibrahim, one of volunteer teachers. "Our country has been ravaged by illiteracy, but if many students get an education it would have a positively impact. Extremism will be checked and our children will not be easily lured into fighting or even brainwashed."

Maj. Nelson Ahebwa, an AMISOM peacekeeper with the Civil Military Unit, or CIMIC, is one of the pioneers of the project. CIMIC launched the initiative, and Ahebwa is happy to see their work paying off as increasingly more Somalis enroll their children and themselves in classes.



"This is my happiest day in life," said Ahebwa, who has already begun groundwork for similar such school in other areas of Mogadishu. "When I first met the elders last month, many were skeptical, although they seemed really interested. The number of students has shot from nine to nearly a 100 within month. We will lobby for support from donors and agencies like UNICEF to assist the students and the school." ■

Tough Lessons

Mentoring and training go hand in hand for AMISOM instructors



By Guled Mohamed

AMISOM instructors are busy training and mentoring hundreds of future Somali soldiers. The training is conducted at the rugged al-Jazeera military camp located at the sandy beaches of southern Mogadishu. Hundreds of enthusiastic young men hoping to join the Somali army are taken through various military drills including urban warfare techniques, light weaponry handling and a lot of physical exercises like running barefoot in the hot sand. The AMISOM Training Department manages the entire operation. The Civil Military Department (CIMIC), who are in charge of relationship between AMISOM and the civilians, also conduct the mentoring leadership training programme for senior TFG military and Police personnel? Maj. Nelson Ahebwa, in charge of CIMIC Operations in AMISOM, offered detailed information about the kind of training the officers undergo and its purpose in regards to Somalia's current state of affairs. Transcribed here are excerpted remarks:

Much as the troops from other countries are important, and are still encouraged to deploy, we believe that local troop generation is crucial. The Somali

people themselves should take the lead in solving the problem facing their country. We can only offer support. AMISOM can never impose peace upon the Somalis, but we can empower them in their efforts to rebuild their state. That is why training for capacity building is among our key areas of focus, especially among the security institutions since they form the strongest pillar in state building.

This is not punishment. These enthusiastic young men have decided to join the army in order to defend their country. No one has forced them like what the al-Shabab do. AMISOM and TFG do not conscript child soldiers as you can see. These are adult males who have got the conviction. When you see them running barefoot in the hot sand, it's because they are new and only have what they came with from home. They are still fresh, after few weeks they will get military uniforms and boots of course.

In general the facility lacks a lot of necessities like accommodation rooms, tents, electricity, beddings and training halls. But slowly things are improving. When we started the training nearly two years ago, we were training in the bush, and the trainees and trainers were sleeping under the trees.

Today at least there are a few prefabs, tents for the trainees, some classrooms under constructions and running water. A few other things will soon be completed.

AMISOM does this in line with its overall mandate of supporting the Transitional Federal Government institutions and the framework of the National Security Stabilisation Plan, NSSP. These training programmes, especially the leadership package, have resulted in great attitudinal change, self awareness, a rekindled sense of patriotism, cohesion of security forces and political awareness, among other achievements. I am very happy to see a big achievement compared to when we first came here. I strongly believe this country will rise from its current difficulties. These Somali troops we train are really inspired and are determined to make a difference. They have a huge potential and only need little technical assistance to bring back normalcy in this beautiful country.

In addressing the leadership knowledge gaps that have been caused by prolonged institutional decay, we believe that the efforts of countries that offer training to lower ranked soldiers will not be undermined. As the saying goes, there are no bad soldiers, but bad commanders! ■

Fighting Force



Newly trained Somali troops gather strength
By Guled Mohamed

Hundreds of Somali military recruits are heeding the call to join the country new army, which is being trained mainly by AMISOM. Most new Somali volunteers undergo training courses at the Jazeera training camp, where AMISOM soldiers offer lessons on arms and combat tactics. Training includes running barefooted and rolling over and over around hot sandy dunes in the scorching sun holding sticks as guns in a battle simulation. AMISOM trainers oversee a tough regimen, but the recruits are keen to serve. One new recruit is former clan militia member Osman Ali, 25, who shared some of his experiences. Below are transcribed excerpts of his comments.

I voluntarily joined the army last month. Life was becoming unbearable. I could no longer escape nor put up with the horrendous acts committed by al-Shabab. Even if you are a civilian, you can never escape from them. They either force you to join them or kill you if you refuse. My fam-

ily moved twice from different locations in Mogadishu just to flee from al-Shabaab. I made up my mind to join the army in order to help bring back normalcy in my country and kick them out.

I used to be a militiaman fighting for my clan. I have taken part in many battles, and I regret to date because I was not fighting for a national cause. I quit being a militia two years ago and started to help in the family business. My worst day was when they killed my elder brother Muse seven months ago for simply running away from their training camp. I got the opportunity to join the Somali army and never hesitated. I just want revenge for his killing and that of many innocent Somalis by destroying this murderous gang falsely using religion to capture power.

The training by AMISOM is very useful. I have learnt many tactics. We learn how to fight in cities like Mogadishu, which is basically the most common battleground. The most important thing I have learnt here is pa-

tience. Generally Somali fighters are impatient. Al-Shabab win many battles because of their patience. But with the training here I believe we will beat them.

I have also learnt how to tighten defence lines, how to remove an enemy from a building, how to protect and guard a VIP in a crowd and how to react from any attack or danger. We will also be attending further training in Uganda. I am really excited and look forward to be deployed to face the enemy of Somalia.

I have sacrificed my life to fight for my country and people and free them extremist groups like al-Shabab. We are all determined to persevere any hardships in order to reap the fruits of peace after liberating the country. To the enemy I have one message: Your time is running out, and the public is tired of your atrocities. We are coming for you and we will never look back until we fully take over Mogadishu and the rest of Somalia. ■



Seaworthy

AMISOM maritime unit faces tough challenges

By Guled Mohamed

Lack of professional naval gear is forcing the AMISOM maritime unit to push their six-man boat deep into the rough, shark-infested waters of the Indian Ocean in order to better protect the main airport and the entire city of Mogadishu from any possible sea assault.

Just like their other comrades in the poorly funded African Union peacekeeping mission, the 45 marines from Uganda have worked in the same difficult conditions for the past two months. The last group went back home due to a rotation in place. The unit has been in place since AMISOM deployed into Mogadishu in March 2007.

Despite the hardship, their commander, Lieutenant Dennis Emenyu, says the marine unit continues to provide much needed protection. The marines spend most of their days and nights patrolling several kilometers of the long Mogadishu coastline in their rickety boat mounted with heavy machine guns.

“We will not tolerate any assault from the sea,” said Emenyu, pointing at nearly a dozen marines busy fighting against the huge

tides to push the boat further into the sea. “The marines are professional and will not hesitate to engage anyone who dares an attack. Our biggest challenge is lack of enough proper gear. As you can see the marines have to push the dinghy with the help of the truck into the sea.”

Piracy has become an international menace along the Somali coastline, threatening the multimillion dollar shipping line along the Indian Ocean. Yet pirates have never attacked any vessels in the areas patrolled by AMISOM marines.

Recently one of the AMISOM marine unit’s surveillance boats capsized deep in the sea after one of the two engines died. As they pondered what to do, the huge waves came unannounced and turned them upside down. Fortunately help was just a phone away. Their comrades rushed to the scene to rescue them. Luckily the officers are seasoned swimmers and divers, with experience swimming in the much smaller Lake Victoria in their home country Uganda. Several marines were slightly wounded in the

unfortunate accident.

The unit is comprised of 45 marines divided into several small groups of six men per boat. In each boat there is a boat commander, two gunners, a technician, a navigator and a diver. The unit has three boats altogether and is sorely in need of updated equipment. An old military truck is their only help whenever they launch their boat in a curved bay just across the main airport that is full of coral reefs.

Second Lieutenant Peter Ambayo was the navigator during that dreadful windy day.

“The sea is amazing. We had never seen such a huge sea before,” Ambayo said with a smile. “We were used to Lake Victoria. We have now gained an invaluable experience. I can’t forget that day we capsized. One engine went dead. I struggled to control the boat. Then a big tide swept us into the cold salty water. It was very frightening, but we survived. We are lucky no one bled. The sharks smell blood from very far and rarely miss their target.” ■



AMISOM areas offer sanctuary to Somalis

Place of Refuge

By Guled Mohamed and Alinoor Moulid

One of the things you quickly notice when visiting any of the AMISOM bases in Mogadishu is how relatively happy and relaxed the civilian population around the areas seem. The reason is simple: They enjoy a measure of peace and security and have access to job opportunities, free medical services as well as other social needs like safe drinking water and sometimes food. AMISOM distributes 60,000 liters of safe drinking water and treats over 800 civilians every day at its medical facilities. Both these services are accessed free of charge by the civilian population.

The above benefits that come with such an international peace-keeping force are like gold in Mogadishu, and in reality a pipe dream for many of the poor residents of the city. Sheikey Ahmed Diriye, a father of three children who lives at the main AMISOM base in southern Mogadishu, said the arrival of the peacekeepers has improved the life of his family greatly. The peacekeepers are actually more of a family than a foreign force, Diriye said.

“AMISOM provides us with water for domestic use,” said Diriye. “Two of my family members are employed by AMISOM. The residents and AMISOM help each other in many ways. We inform them when something is going wrong or when we have problems, and they help us. They had security concerns after moving here but we sat down and reached agreements on how best to cohabitate. Now everything is okay.”

Armed opposition groups such as al-Shabab Hizbul Islam have both made it almost impossible for people to freely live in areas under the militants’ control. They force residents to adhere to a strict form of Shariah law that is uncommon among the moderate Somalis. They have banned music, smoking and cinemas and even force men

to grow beards. Youths with stylish haircuts are intimidated and often face a sharp razor cut in the streets from patrolling fighters, who flog anyone seen defying their orders.

Women have not been spared either. Many beauty salons in areas under the control of armed opposition groups have been forced to shut down. Women are generally discouraged from leaving their homes, even the ones operating small businesses who are often the breadwinners for their families. Militants have even gone a step further by exporting their terror campaigns to Uganda, which has contributed over 2,000 of the AMISOM peacekeepers to Somalia. Extremists from Somalia recently claimed responsibility for the twin July 11 blasts in Kampala, which killed 76 people and wounded many more.

“Someone should tell al-Shabab and Hizbul Islam they can never control morality,” said one 20-year-old university student who spoke on condition of anonymity. He lives near Bakara market, which is controlled by al-Shabab. “They have made life miserable for us. They control my dressing, hairstyle and everything I do. This is no longer about religion. It’s just a crazy foreign culture they are trying to impose on us. If I had means to leave I would never have thought twice. We are tired of their bullying.”

Zeinab Umal is a 19-year-old Somali girl who lives with her family at the Jalle Siyad military academy in south-western Mogadishu, an area protected by Burundian peacekeepers. She says life has drastically improved since AMISOM peacekeepers moved into her area.

“Before they came we used to be constantly bothered by clan militias who fought amongst themselves and sometimes robbed us,” she said. “We are now safe. Life is good.” ■

Confronting the Enemy

We must face the al-Shabab menace head on

By Capt. Chris Magezi
UPDF Army Spokesman in Somalia

We learned with deep sorrow, shock and sadness about the tragic terrorist attacks against our people back home in Kampala July 11 that resulted in many deaths and injuries. Attacks against innocent people and unarmed civilians are acts too cowardly, barbaric and backward to be justified. These are the works of evil and extremist forces who unfortunately continue to live among us. We pray to the Lord Almighty to give the relatives of the deceased and those who were injured the strength and serenity they need to cope with their losses.

We must at the same time remain firm and not give in to these evil and extremist forces, however insurmountable the consequences may seem. Anything to the contrary would otherwise hand victory to these forces and make the world more unsafe than ever before.

Al-shabab, a violent extremist group operating in Somalia, has claimed responsibility for the attack in Kampala. The group is allied to al-Qaeda forces fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan and share the same ideology. They harass, intimidate and bomb the population in order to suppress them into compliance with

their extremism. They have applied a multitude of brutal and terror tactics like amputation of limbs, summary executions, desecration of burial sites, forced marriages and recruitment, abductions, assassinations and suicide bombings to reach their goal.

A classic example came Dec. 3 last year, when al-Shabab attacked a graduation ceremony of medical students from Banadir University at Shamow Hotel in Mogadishu, killing 24 people and wounding 60 others, including four government ministers. Many of the students killed were new medical graduates in a country with a dire need for qualified medical practitioners. The Transitional Federal Government of Somalia

and AMISOM continue to stand in the way of this extremist force, and the extremists have grown increasingly desperate.

Starting June 25, al-shabab mounted a sustained assault on TFG and AMISOM positions at Kilometer Zero (KM0) at the heart of Mogadishu and unsuccessfully attempted to overrun it. They were repulsed with severe losses on their side. KM0 is a key terrain overlooking the Presidential Villa Somalia palace and seaport, which would have put the two strategic areas in direct line of hostile fire.



On April 27, a truck laden with explosives and drums of petrol attempted to enter this area. Fortunately, our ever-vigilant soldiers managed to stop the truck in time with a rocket-propelled grenade, and it exploded with a devastating ball of fire critically injuring three of our brave soldiers. All three suicide bombers in the truck also perished.

Licking their wounds from these great losses incurred in succession, al-Shabab could have been expected to launch a desperate suicide attack, though few imagined they would strike so far away from Somalia. Understandably so, out of a deep

frustration after this latest attack, some voices in Uganda are now calling on the government to withdraw Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF) from Somalia. Our people should know that this extremism currently growing in our midst is like a cancer which must be checked while it's still in its infancy stage to stop it gaining further ground.

The good news is that this is possible. In a nutshell, the terrorist attack in Kampala should justify why the African Union Mission in Somalia should be strengthened further, perhaps with even a greater sense of urgency. Otherwise there is no guarantee that those who do not contribute troops for Somalia will be immune to future terrorist attacks. ■

PROFILES

Portraits of our brave men and women on duty



Home Cooking

Lance Corporal Kanya Samuel
spices things up

By Guled Mohamed

Lance Corporal Kanya Samuel is a Ugandan AMISOM chef at the main AMISOM base in Halane, Mogadishu. Samuel is a 25-year-old father of two from Apach in Northern Uganda. He is in charge of preparing meals for senior AMISOM officers as well as guests at the senior officers' cantina on the Halane base.

As a northerner in Uganda, Samuel knows what a conflict is. He has witnessed the worst violence and callous acts committed by the Lords Resistance Army. Samuel is grateful to be part of an African peacekeeping mission in Somalia that hopes to help foster peace and reconciliation to end a 20-year civil war that has ravaged the country. He believes Somalis can learn a lot from Uganda's experience with conflict and calls upon Somalis to lay down arms and embrace peace.

Samuel is a young, light-skinned man who is passionate about his work as an army cook feeding some 120 people every day, including visiting delegations, ambassadors and journalists as well as AMISOM officers. Assisted by two other cooks, Samuel

has served in Somalia for eight months. His previous stints include a deployment in Congo as a cook and Sudan as a soldier. He has served in the Ugandan armed forces for ten years.

In Mogadishu, Samuel works long hours without a break from 4 a.m. to 9 p.m. The cooks serve breakfast from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m., after which they start preparing lunch served from 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m. After that the chefs cap their busy schedule by serving evening tea and dinner from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

The meals provided by Samuel and his helpers are all served as buffet placed on insulated plastic containers placed on top of several plastic tables in a big tent that accommodates around 150 guests. Kitchen serves tea, coffee, cereals, bread and butter, omelets and boiled eggs for breakfast. The lunch and dinner menus include rice, semolina (ugali), Irish potatoes, spaghetti macaroni, beef, beans, vegetables and juices. The meat is often substituted with fish or chicken in order to balance the meals.

Samuel and his fellow cooks produce a staggering amount of food each day. To-

gether they fry or boil four trays of eggs for breakfast, cook 25 kilograms of rice for lunch and peel two sacks of potatoes for dinner, to mention but a few of their chores.

During his limited leisure time, Samuel relaxes a bit. You will see him listening to music or busy watching football matches at the mess hall with his sports regalia or an Arsenal FC Jersey, the team he supports in the English Premier League. He is an ardent soccer fan and is often heard teasing supporters of other opposing English football clubs like Chelsea and Manchester United.

As a chef Samuel rarely gets time to venture out of the camp. But Samuel says that if duty calls he is ready to help with peacekeeping duties off the base as well.

"They say once a soldier always a soldier," Samuel said while cutting onions one afternoon. "I love my work because we are peacekeepers who have come to help our Somali brothers achieve peace. We are really concerned about the senseless war raging here. At the end no one benefits from these wars. There is no life without peace." ■

Huseni Ivone is a female Burundian sergeant. She has a very important job of screening women visitors into the main Burundi base in the dilapidated Jale Siyad military academy in a bid to prevent any possible suicide attacks against the peacekeepers. The Burundian base often comes under attack by opposition forces. She knows how dangerous her job can be. The mother of two from Kamonge, 27 kilometers south of Bujumbura, explains her work below:

Being a Muslim I wake up at 5 a.m. to say my morning prayers, after which I prepare myself for breakfast. I then report to my duty station. I work at the main gate into the compound where I screen all women visiting our base. We screen them for our own safety as well as theirs. As you know opposition forces often attack us for assisting the government. So when anyone approaches our gate they have to explain through an interpreter who is across the road in the main road where they are going and for what purpose. Most of our Somali visitors are those seeking free treatment at our clinic.

After the interpreter frisks them and gives us a nod that he or she is clean, we ask them to slowly approach our gate past the main road. Once there, one of our male soldiers further frisks male visitors while I search female visitors in a veiled room away from the males.

In our Muslim culture no man can touch a woman. That is why I do the frisking of all women visitors. I first ask them to put down any luggage or personal property like phones and then to remove their veils. I record any personal values and put them separately in a safe place. I frisk them from head to toe using my hands first before using a metal detector. Once am satisfied they are clean I ask them whether they know where they are going. If it's their first visit one of our soldiers would escort her to where she is going.

I have been here for two months and have made good friends already. I have learned a few words already. Like "sug" meaning wait, "kale" come and "Bah" go. I really pity Somali women. They face so many problems. Imagine being a mother and the bread winner of a family and yet you have no stable job. I wish the Somali men would know what their women go through.

I really miss my family. My two children are very young. I had to leave them to come and take part in this important peacekeeping mission. There is a time in life when you have to make a sacrifice. I chose to voluntarily come here leaving my family in order to help my Somali sisters and brothers.

The Somalis should realize that peace is everything. If you have no peace then you are your own slave. You cannot even fend for your family. What sort of life is that? It is high time for the Somalis to realize that al-Shabab and other groups are using the religion for their own selfish gains. We really love this country and the Somalis, and that is why we have risked our lives to come and help them get out of this problem.

My family fled from Burundi to Tanzania in 1994 when war broke out in our country. I know what being a refugee is because I have experienced it. I was also a rebel fighting the government. During our battles we never targeted civilians, and when an opportunity to reconcile with the government was presented to us our leaders took it because we were only fighting for our rights and that of our people.

In Somalia, al-Shabab do not want peace and are not nationalist. They just want to take over the country by force. It's time for Somalis to unite and stop this murderous group from taking control. No one will be safe if they take over. ■

Keeping Watching

Burundian Huseni Ivone
standing guard

By Guled Mohamed





Corporal Joshua Katende

Rolling Heavy

By Guled Mohamed

Corporal Joshua Katende is a tank driver from Lubaga division in Kampala, Uganda. Katene, who is doing his second tour as a peacekeeper in Somalia, says the mission has grown over the years. When Katende, 27, was initially deployed with the first bunch of AMISOM peacekeepers in March 2007, the living conditions were worse and security much better than now. He shared his thoughts with the AMISOM Bulletin below:

I joined the army in 2005 after graduating from Buganda Royal Institute in Mengo, Kampala, with a diploma in mechanical engineering. This is my second spell in Somalia as a peacekeeper. I was among the first batch of AMISOM peacekeepers to land in Mogadishu in March 2007. We were received warmly by the people of Somalia. I remember driving around the Somali capital with people waving at us all over. It was really good.

What really caught my eye was the size of the Indian Ocean. In Uganda, we have no sea. The humid conditions were also a challenge for us when we first came. But now we are accustomed. The Somali people are very friendly. It's only a small fraction of people who don't want peace here; they continue to fight for no apparent reason.

Since we were the first to arrive we had to build everything from scratch. We used to sleep on the ground and had to construct our living quarters, which were basically tents. I can see the AMISOM base has really improved; there is even air conditioning in the prefabs!

When I wake up in the morning at 5:30am, I say my prayers. I ask God to give me strength to serve the people of Somalia and to

also bring peace to this great and beautiful country. I also pray for my country Uganda as well as to our president. After prayers I go the gym to work out for 30 minutes after which I take my breakfast.

Since am a tank driver, my first task is always to run a check of my tank. I have to check everything to make sure there are no mechanical faults. When I am certain everything is in order I wait for further orders from my superiors.

I have seen the good and the bad side of Mogadishu. In 2007, we were rarely targeted by al-Shabab group and other opposition forces fighting to topple the government. But these days it's different. They attack us almost every other day. It pains me to see young boys who have no clue of war being used against us and the government by the al-Shabab. The Somali people must rise to help their government and AMISOM defeat these opposition forces who don't want peace.

This is a beautiful country with such a long coastline. The fish alone are enough to sustain everyone. I know there is also oil here because we used to wake up in the morning to find our beddings soaked with oily grease. They should stop fighting and develop their country. This country is so rich, and all it needs is some peace for the Somalis to start exploiting its resources.

In spite of the current security problem, am very optimistic Somalis will rise up from the current security challenges. We are here to help them realize peace and not to aggravate the problem as claimed by the opposition forces.

I would love to return back to Somalia when the war ends to enjoy the fruits of peace with the Somali people. ■

No Turning Back

Why international support for Somalia must remain strong

By Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke

In recent months, many in the United States seem to have given up on Somalia. In March, for example, the Council on Foreign Relations issued a special report calling for a “new” policy of “constructive disengagement” from our country -- in other words, the withdrawal of international support for the Somali government. That idea is undoubtedly tempting to many in Washington, as well as in London and other Western capitals, given the difficulty of the problems we face as a government working to restore order across a hostile land. But this supposedly new approach would be as disastrous today as it has been in the past, both for Somalia and the international community.

In fact, “constructive disengagement” is a nice euphemism for the same very old and thoroughly failed policies that Western countries have used for years to wrongly argue that Somalia’s problems can remain in Somalia. This was the prevailing attitude of much of the international community during most of the past two decades -- until rampant piracy drew navies from around the world toward Somali waters. The presence offshore of a flotilla of warships from the navies of more than two dozen countries illustrates vividly how our country’s internal problems are a pressing international issue.

The global nature of Somalia’s troubles is also visible on the ground, where an influx of foreign fighters is swelling the ranks of militant oppositionists who are openly aligned with al Qaeda. Hundreds of foreign militants are currently in Somalia, ostensibly to fight the Somali government alongside al-Shabab and Hizbul Islam, extremist groups that draw inspiration from some of the world’s most radical Islamist groups. Indeed, a recent Human Rights Watch report looking at life for Somalis in Shabab territory reads as if it could have come from the organization’s old file on Afghanistan’s Taliban. Extremists desecrate the graves of Somalis seen as somehow un-Islamic under their warped interpretation of Islam. Shabab authorities regularly issue edicts banning everything from flying our Somali flag to watching the World Cup, from ringing school bells to using tractors for farming. Shabab enforcers flog women for failing to wear head-to-toe garments, even though many families simply cannot afford them. These same extremists blew up medical students and professors at a graduation ceremony last year, and they are undoubtedly responsible for the five headless corpses found in April in Mogadishu. The victims had been working to construct a new Somali parliament building.

The world has seen this kind of savagery before, when the Taliban destroyed ancient Buddhist statues in Afghanistan and when al Qaeda-linked militants systematically bombed holy sites throughout Iraq. As the history of the past decade shows,

the extremists in Somalia will also undoubtedly begin exporting violence throughout the region and around the world if we do not confront them. And indeed, Africans are taking the lead in this fight. The Somali government, backed by African Union peacekeeping forces, is gradually extending the rule of law in Mogadishu and elsewhere in Somalia. The hard fight on the ground is ours to win, but we need international support from afar to remain strong if we hope to succeed.

Yet nothing can be achieved without financial resources. And unfortunately, all sources of revenue that our government could have used have either collapsed or been destroyed. What Somalia needs most now from countries like Britain and the United States is financial support, not troops or peacekeepers. Our government is closely watching the events unfolding in Afghanistan, where U.S. and British soldiers are fighting bravely in a war we consider a distant front of our own. Somalis are eager to do their part in pushing back against the menace of Islamist extremism, but they lack the resources to do so. Support from the African Union and the United Nations is helping us stand up a proper army, but it is not enough. We need more support for our armed forces if we hope to win on battlefields in Mogadishu and across Somalia in the coming months.

Somalia also needs more international support for initiatives off the battlefield. We seek greater help in restoring legitimate commercial activity so that we can make the most of our vast potential wealth in fish, oil, gas, and minerals and someday fund long-term governance and development on our own. For now, we urgently need resources to establish and maintain public services, such as health care, education, water, and basic sanitation, in areas under government control. We know better than anyone what international navies are now learning the hard way: The best way to overcome terrorism and piracy is ultimately to fill the vacuum in which they thrive, namely the absence of state authority and good governance.

Our Transitional Federal Government was established in 2004. As the name makes clear, we will try our best to govern only until the people of Somalia can choose their leaders in an environment of peace, security, and hopefulness about the future. Contrary to what some believe, such a day is within reach, owing to the work our government has done already with help from the international community. But that day may never arrive if Somalia is again left standing alone. ■

This article first appeared in Foreign Policy magazine in June

Game Days

Football mania sweeps Mogadishu *By Guled Mohamed*



In Somalia, FIFA World Cup euphoria touched virtually everyone in the country when the event got underway in June, from African Union peacekeepers to young soccer-mad Somali boys. The whole country seemed caught up in the excitement as the first-ever World Cup played on African soil unfolded.

World Cup fanfare was everywhere in Mogadishu, where fighting seemed to lessen as football watchers crowded around television sets to view games. Many people believe the gunmen who have made Mogadishu so inhospitable were also watching the beautiful game, hence an apparent level of relative calm. The two main insurgent groups in Somalia had declared total war on viewing the World Cup in areas under their control. Armed opposition groups had banned



watching the World Cup, claiming the tournament is encouraging immorality. Some suspect that the militant groups called for a ban on watching the games to ensure their child soldiers stayed on duty.

In Mogadishu and elsewhere in Somalia, the urge of many residents to catch a glimpse of the football bonanza was not dampened by the ban imposed by militant groups, despite the unprecedented killing of two teenagers and the arrest of 30 others watching the game by extremists in Mogadishu's Wardhigley district. Additionally, militants arrested 14 others in Afgoye, some 30 kilometers west

of Mogadishu, as part of the ban.

Despite the extremist decree against watching matches, screenings of live games secretly sprung up. The Somali TV station Shabelle was forced to relocate overnight from the sprawling Bakara market, a haven for armed opposition groups, to a building near the main airport in the government-controlled area of southern Mogadishu in order to re-broadcast the World Cup games. Somali boys could be seen moving from house to house looking for a place to catch a glimpse of the matches when they missed seating space at the over-packed screenings.

Women were also caught up in football fever. Indian soap operas or Bollywood movies, traditionally favorites among Somalia women, were relegated to second choice as football took priority. "My wife has just called to demand a cable TV subscription," said



a radio reporter who did not want to be named. "World Cup fever has touched everyone in Mogadishu. She no longer wants to watch her soap operas. Even women now want to watch soccer. Before the World Cup she had no interest in football but says all her friends are now watching the World Cup matches. This is ridiculous."

For the African Union peacekeepers on duty in Somalia, the World Cup became much-needed leisure time after a day's hard work in the humid conditions. During the World Cup AU peacekeepers could spend evenings enjoying a football game in the cool Indian Ocean sea breeze. The happiest moments for the peacekeepers came when an African team scored, as happened on June 11 when Siphiwe Tshabalala scored a thunderous goal for South Africa against the much-fancied Mexicans. Celebrations among the AU peacekeepers erupted again a few days later, when Asamoah Gwan scored from the penalty spot to give Ghana a victory against Serbia.

The normally silent mess hall where senior AU officers take their meals bursts into life amid wild celebrations with each goal scored by an African team. The AMISOM officers' usual calm demeanor gave way to high emotions, their football fanaticism revealing itself with every moment of the beautiful game. ■

By Guled Mohamed



History of a Nation

Radio Mogadishu archives house national treasure

Much of Mogadishu has fallen into ruin through 20 years of conflict, with most government historic sites, installations and properties destroyed or looted. But Radio Mogadishu is home to a largely untouched national treasure: tens of thousands of audio tapes containing songs, poetry and interviews dating as far back as pre-independence days in Somalia.

Located at the Ministry of Information building close to the white-washed Villa Somalia presidential palace, the old tapes are securely stacked on sky-blue painted shelves. Workers have classified the recordings by subject for easy access to the collection, which is housed among sound-proof walls and watched over by Somali troops.

Information Minister Dahir Gelle, whose ministry is in charge of Radio Mogadishu and its historic collection, says the government is asking for technical assistance from various nations and international agencies to help digitize the analog tapes in order to increase their shelf life.

“Most of the tapes are in good condition except a few that are worn out,” Gelle said. “We need to digitize all tapes so that we don’t lose the data. We have put forward our request and hope we will get the necessary assistance to help us keep the huge audio collections for future generations to know their nation’s history.”

The tapes already have an audience among old radio hands and Somali history buffs who know of the collection. A longtime Somali technician who has worked for over 40 years in the business and a bunch of former guards from Radio Mogadishu often refresh their aging memories of the golden days by listening to the tapes on rusty German-made audio players. Liban Abdi Warsame, a senior pro-

ducer with Radio Bar Kulan, started his journalistic career at Radio Mogadishu eight years ago. He says the facility is the only national asset that survived damage in Mogadishu thanks largely to the vision of the late world-famous warlord Mohamed Farah Aideed, whose forces took control of the facility after the ouster of former President Mohamed Siyad Barre in 1991.

“Somalia’s history is all recorded in the old audio tapes at Radio Mogadishu,” Warsame said. “We were thoroughly frisked every time we enter the library. Knives, matches boxes, gas lighters and weapons of all make are not allowed into the premises. The huge audio archives taught me a lot of my country’s history from pre-independence interviews of our leaders, old poems full of messages to classical songs. It is just magnificent.” ■



Somalia's longtime internal turmoil has left many Somalis struggling. However, there are many Somalis who have done well despite the lawlessness. Captain Mahamud Sheikh Ali, a former air force colonel is a role model for many ordinary people in the troubled country thanks largely to his warm personality and commitment to serve his people.

When Captain Mahamud was appointed as managing director of the Somali Civil Aviation and Meteorology Authority in May 2007, many were skeptical, and not much was expected from his appointment. But he was determined to prove them wrong. Four years on, Captain Mahamud has managed to transform the international airport to the amazement of all. With little financial support he has renovated the entire airport complex and immigration offices, built a new runway, erected an 80-foot air traffic control tower, reorganized the chaotic baggage system and even made sure there is a duty free shop and restaurant to serve his clients. If you are an important figure visiting Mogadishu expect to be ushered by well-groomed, smartly dressed protocol officers into an air-conditioned and well furnished VIP lounge complete with leather seats and fresh flowers. Cold mineral water manufactured in Mogadishu, soft drinks or coffee await you.

Captain Mahamud is not done yet. Even small details do not escape his attention. I saw a laborer carefully painting the metal bars that act as a barrier between the main complex and the open aircraft parking area. The captain says the beautification of the premises is never-ending.

After Somalia succumbed to anarchy in 1991 following the ouster of former president Mohamed Siad Barre, government offices and other important public installations like the airport and seaport were vandalized. The main airport, later renamed Aden Ade international airport in 2007, remained closed until it was re-opened by an Islamit administration that reigned for six months from June to December 2006. It has been operational since then, though in a dilapidated state.

When asked about what inspired him to do well under the harsh and poor conditions, his response was typical of the man. "I have not done anything amazing," Captain Mahamud said. "This is our country. We have to build it, because we have no other country. As a former colonel in the Somali air force and a Boeing pilot in the national airline, I was educated with public money. This is the time to serve my people and country."

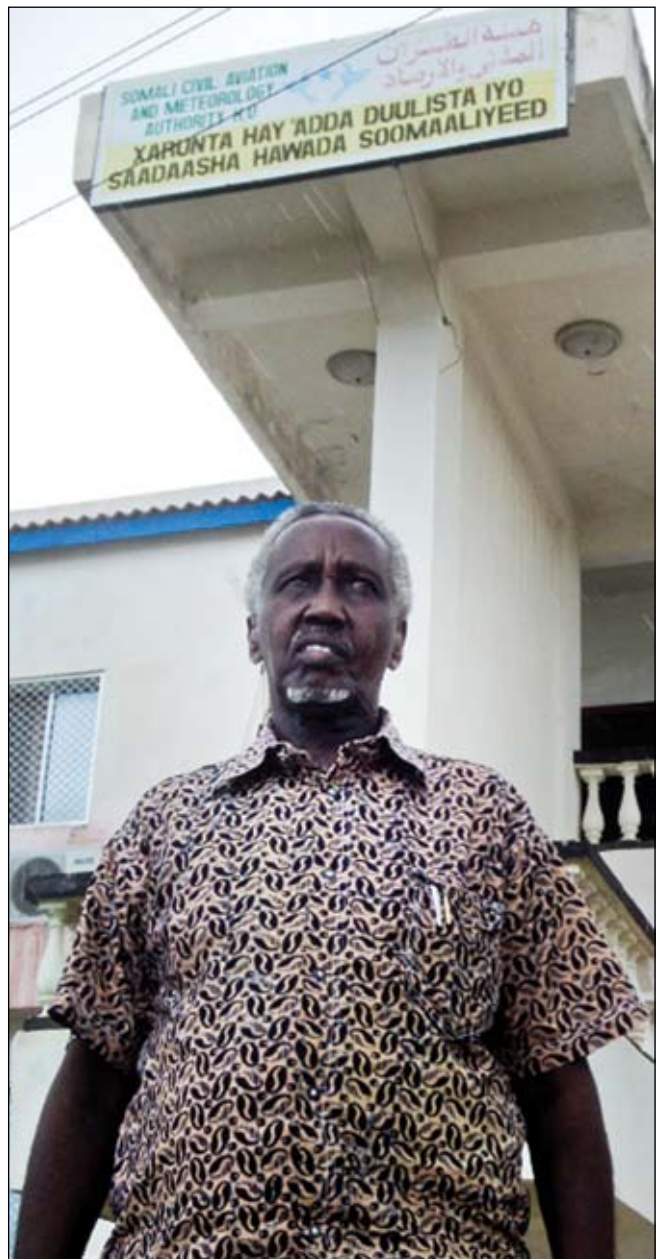
Captain Mahamud is full of praise for the AMISOM peacekeepers responsible for creating a favorable environment for him and his team to implement their plans. He says the enhanced revenue is mainly due to improved security at the airport. "When I came we used to collect few thousand dollars per month," Captain Mahamud said. "Now the figure has gone nearly 10 times more. The income is mostly from passenger planes. Foreign visitors pay \$50 for an entry visa while the airline companies pay a nominal fee as landing fee and tax. The federal government takes 60 percent of the income we generate, the other 40 percent is what we run the facility with, pay salaries to employees and do the various repair works."

Captain Mahamud has a word of advice for corrupt public servants in Somalia. "If you think of making money as a public servant you are doomed," Captain Mahamud said. "You will never get anywhere however much you steal. The best policy is to be content with your pay and work extra hard to ensure you leave a legacy. Life is very short and it's good to honorably retire after you have achieved something, however little it might be, for your own people. That is what every Somali should strive for if we want our country to develop and regain its place among other nations." ■

Civil Service

Despite high success, Captain Mahamud keeps feet firmly on ground.

By Guled Mohamed



Cartoon of the Month

