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SECTION 1 OF 10

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WARNING: TOPIC: DOMESTIC POLITICAL, FOUO, INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL

SERIAL: AFP20090416636022

/***** THIS IS A COMBINED MESSAGE *****/

BODY

COUNTRY: UNITED STATES

SUBJ: GERMANY: AFRICOM-RELATED PRESS SUMMARY 16 APRIL 09

(U//FOUO)

SOURCE: STUTTGART AFRICA COMMAND PRESS SUMMARY IN ENGLISH 16 APR

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09 (U//FOUO)

TEXT:

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(Attachment not included: AFP20090416636022001.jpg) United States Africa Command
Public Affairs Office

16 April 2009

AFRICOM-related news stories

A summary of news stories related to United States Africa Command

Somali pirates attack another U.S. vessel

Stars and Stripes - By Sandra Jontz

16 April 2009

[http://www.stripes.com/article.asp?section\(-EQUAL-\)104&article\(-EQUAL-\)62073](http://www.stripes.com/article.asp?section(-EQUAL-)104&article(-EQUAL-)62073)

U.S. ship attacked by **Somali pirates**

Xinhua - By non-attributed author

15 April 2009

<http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-04/15/content>

(-UNDERSCORE-)11189979.htm

Somali Extremists Have al Qaeda Ties

Wall Street Journal - By Ali Soufan

15 April 2009

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123976236664319677.html?mod>

(-EQUAL-)googlenews(-UNDERSCORE-)wsj

Clinton unveils initiative to combat 'scourge of piracy'

CNN - By Elise Labott

15 April 2009

<http://www.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/04/15/clinton.piracy/>

Experts Assess Complex Issues Surrounding Piracy Off Somali Coast

VOA - By Andre de Nesnera

15 April 2009

<http://www.voanews.com/english/2009-04-15-voa57.cfm>

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Mozambique: Government Pledges to Solve Problems of Demobilised Soldiers

AllAfrica - By non-attributed author

15 April 2009

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200904150700.html>

Relative calm continues in Darfur as UN-African force begins rotations

Xinhua - By non-attributed author

15 April 2009

<http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-04/16/content>

(-UNDERSCORE-)11191871.htm

ANALYSIS-Pirates, gangs fuel Gulf of Guinea woes

Reuters - By David Lewis

15 April 2009

<http://www.reuters.com/article/africaCrisis/idUSL9951481>

/***** BEGINNING OF SECTION 2 *****/

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Nigerians Fear More Delta Violence Before Elections

VOA By Gilbert da Costa

15 April 2009

<http://www.voanews.com/english/2009-04-15-voa48.cfm>

Mogae seeks US support for Africa

The Daily Free Press (Boston University) - By Kaley Sweeney

15 April 2009

[http://www.dailyfreepress.com/mogae-seeks-us-support-for-africa-1.](http://www.dailyfreepress.com/mogae-seeks-us-support-for-africa-1.1715778)

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UN News Service Africa Briefs

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15 April 2009

[http://www.un.org/apps/news/region.asp?Region\(-EQUAL-\)AFRICA](http://www.un.org/apps/news/region.asp?Region(-EQUAL-)AFRICA)

Darfur: relative calm continues as UN-African force begins

rotations

Belgium to donate \$7 million to UN agency to aid poor African farmers

Liberia: rule of law key to UN efforts to support security, envoy says

UN envoy to Somalia calls for boost in international efforts to fight piracy

Somalia: 60,000 return to unstable conditions in capital - UN agency

Somali pirates attack another U.S. vessel

Stars and Stripes - By Sandra Jontz

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16 April 2009

Another U.S.-flagged cargo ship was attacked by pirates Tuesday off the coast of Somalia, though U.S. Navy officials refused to speculate whether the brazen attack was related to pirates' promises of retaliation.

Tuesday's attack on the Liberty Sun, with its roughly 20-member crew of U.S. citizens, included pirates shooting rocket-propelled grenades and automatic weapons in a failed attempt to take over the ship, officials said. The ship had been headed toward Mombasa, Kenya, to deliver food aid, said Lt. Stephanie Murdock, a spokeswoman with U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/5th Fleet. The incident comes on the heels of the Maersk Alabama incident, which ended when Navy SEALs aboard the USS Bainbridge shot and killed three pirates who held the Alabama's captain, Richard Phillips, on a lifeboat for five days.

Murdock would not say whether the U.S. Navy or coalition forces have altered their mission as a result of the attacks on two U.S.-flagged vessels or on the pirates' threat to seek vengeance for five pirates who have been killed by U.S. and French forces in two recent at-sea hostage rescues.

But maritime analysts and military experts said the most recent incidents showed that a sea-based effort in fighting the piracy is not effective enough.

Jim Gavrillis, an international affairs fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and retired U.S. Special Forces lieutenant colonel, said there are also limits to what the military can do on land.

"There would be short term military gains, eliminating some pirates, and possibly slowing down some of the piracy for a while," he said.

But, he warned, military strikes alone won't solve the problem.

"It is too profitable, there are little alternatives for business, and there is no government to keep criminal organizations in check," said Gavrillis, adding that without a functioning government, piracy will continue to be a problem.

"Military operations will not change the environment that allows pirates to flourish. The more limited the military operations are, the more successful they will probably be. Longer duration operations with broad missions will likely get bogged down," he said.

The recent hijacking incidents show "that no sea space anywhere remotely near Somalia is safe. And that the Somali pirates are by

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now very accomplished seafarers," said Jim Wilson, Middle East correspondent for Fairplay International Shipping Weekly and with Lloyd's Register-Fairplay, a global provider of maritime information to the shipping industry.

The Liberty Sun was approached by suspected pirates on two small boats, officials said.

"The pirates were not successful in their attempt to board the vessel and the Liberty Sun proceeded to perform evasive maneuvers," a Navy spokeswoman said.

Crewmember Thomas Urbik sent his mother an e-mail detailing some of the attack, according to The Associated Press.

"We are under attack by pirates, we are being hit by rockets. Also bullets," the AP quoted Urbik's e-mail. "We are barricaded in the engine room and so far no one is hurt. A rocket penetrated the
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bulkhead but the hole is small. Small fire, too, but put out."

The number of ships and crew held by **Somali pirates** varies, depending on the source. The NATO anti-piracy mission reports 16 ships are being held for ransom, while the International Maritime Bureau says 19 ships and some 300 crewmembers are being held. The U.S. Navy says that 23 hijackings have occurred so far this year -- well ahead of 2008's pace, when a record 40 hijackings were reported.

The Navy spearheads Combined Task Force 151, a multinational effort to prevent pirates from attacking merchant ships in the Gulf of Aden. The European Union also has established an anti-piracy effort in the region, and nations like Russia, China and Japan have sent ships to escort convoys of ships through pirate-infested waters.

Responsibility for the piracy problem is split between units in the Gulf of Aden and units on land. The task force falls under U.S. Central Command, which oversees hot spots such as Iraq and Afghanistan, but not Africa. While U.S. Central Command is responsible for any maritime operations in that region, U.S. Africa Command would head up any that are land-based.

"We have not been directed to conduct any operations in Somalia," spokesman Vince Crawley said.

Somalia instead sits in the domain of Africa Command -- specifically, its subordinate command, the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa.

Piracy, spawned in the lawlessness of Somalia, has not changed the

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CJTF-HOA's core mission, said spokesman Air Force Capt. Matthew Stines.

That mission focuses on civil-military operations, military-to-military training and improving conditions for foreign investment, Stines said in an e-mail.

"Our overarching goal with these programs is to create an environment that counters the ideological support of extremism," he wrote.

The efforts thus have been handled as a criminal problem, not as a military one.

"The U.S. has, in relation to Somali piracy, been very reluctant to intervene with force when ships, flags and crews of other nations have been involved," Wilson said. "They have tended to let the owner take the lead. With the U.S. crew/flag, they have opted to use deadly force rather than pay a ransom or give safe passage to the pirates."

But, he said, "I sense that there is quite a lot of political indignation that a U.S. vessel has been attacked. I can't really tell what, or if, this will translate into political or direct action in relation to the long-term Somali piracy problem, but the potential is there."

U.S. ship attacked by **Somali pirates**

Xinhua - By non-attributed author

15 April 2009

A U.S. ship carrying humanitarian aid was attacked Tuesday by **Somali pirates**. Damage was caused but the crew were not injured, the owner of the ship said in a statement.

The Liberty Sun, with its crew of about 20 Americans, was on its way to Mombasa, Kenya, when the pirates fired rocket-propelled grenades and automatic weapons at it, the ship's owner Liberty Maritime Corp. said.

The cargo ship carried food for famine-stricken nations in Africa.

U.S. Navy sailed to aid when the vessel reported being attacked but the pirates had left when the destroyer Bainbridge arrived some six hours later, U.S. Central Command spokesman Jack Hanzlik said.

The vessel continued on its way to Kenya under Navy escort although a rocket penetrated the bulkhead and caused a small hole, the company said.

President Barack Obama vowed Monday to "halt the rise of piracy," as the **Somali pirates** continue attacking and hijacking

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ships on the open sea. They seized a total of four ships with 60 hostages Tuesday.

Somali Extremists Have al Qaeda Ties

Wall Street Journal - By Ali Soufan

15 April 2009

The mortars fired at the plane carrying New Jersey Rep. Donald Payne out of Mogadishu Airport on Monday were a sharp reminder that although the recent focus on Somalia has been on piracy, the bigger threat comes from terrorists operating onshore. On land, radical jihadists now have one of the largest territories from which to operate since the Taliban hosted al Qaeda in Afghanistan.

The terrorist group that fired on Mr. Payne is al Shabab ("the Youths"), a one-time military wing of the Islamist Courts Union that ruled Somalia for six months before Ethiopia invaded and deposed them in December 2006. Designated as a terrorist

/***** BEGINNING OF SECTION 4 *****/

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organization by the State Department, al Shabab's aim is to create a Taliban-style Islamic state in Somalia. In pursuit of this goal it uses the most ruthless of methods: executions, beatings, torture and suicide bombing.

Since Ethiopian troops withdrew from Somalia earlier this year, al Shabab has taken control of important towns inland and along the coast, including the port towns of Kismayo and Marka. The group has also reportedly entered into financial arrangements with pirates operating from port cities under al Shabab's control. Al Shabab's numbers are steadily rising; it's estimated that they now have up to 7,000 fighters. And it helps that they pay their fighters with cash as well as the promise of martyrdom.

Unfortunately, al Shabab is a particularly difficult terrorist group to combat because of its asymmetrical and loose organizational structure. Similar to post-9/11 al Qaeda, its senior leaders give broad direction but leave day-to-day operations to individual commanders who control groups of around 100 fighters. So even if senior leaders are killed, individual commanders can easily continue operating.

Al Qaeda has had a relationship with Somali extremists since the early 1990s when Osama bin Laden was based in Sudan. During my time as an FBI agent targeting the al Qaeda network, I interviewed several operatives in the late '90s and '00s who told me how bin Laden established a base in Nairobi to facilitate the

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group's Somali operations under the cover of a nonprofit group called Help Africa. Members of the Nairobi cell coordinated the 1998 East Africa embassy suicide bombings that killed 12 U.S. citizens and hundreds of Africans. This marked al Qaeda's emergence as an internationally recognized top terrorist group and earned bin Laden a place on the FBI's most-wanted list. To this day, al Shabab's leadership is closely linked to al Qaeda. Many in the current leadership cadre are graduates of al Qaeda training camps. Al Shabab leader Ibrahim Haji Jama trained with al Qaeda in Afghanistan (his nom de guerre in Somalia is al-Afghani). Another leader, Abu Taha al-Sudani, known also as Tariq Abdullah, was al Qaeda's leader in East Africa and is believed to be the main financier of its African operations. Veteran al Qaeda terrorists help make up al Shabab's ranks. They include Fazul Abdullah Muhammad, a former member of bin Laden's Nairobi base who is wanted by the U.S. -- a \$5 million FBI bounty is on his head -- for his involvement in the 1998 East African embassy bombings. Two other prominent al Shabab members, Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan and Issa Osman Issa, are also wanted for their involvement in terrorist activities.

Bin Laden himself has described al-Shabab as "one of the most important armies in the Mujahid Islamic battalion." And in a recording last February, bin Laden's deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, devoted the bulk of his message to praising al Shabab in Somalia, calling their recent activities "a step on the path of the victory of Islam."

Somalia's president, Sharif Ahmed, the leader of the Islamic Courts Union, is today seen as a moderate. He has promised to restrain his former comrades. But even if he is sincere, he lacks the resources and troops to stop the lawlessness in his country. All of this is important because the freedom of radical extremists to operate in Somalia is a direct threat to America and the West. The lawlessness in Somalia and along its coastlines, combined with its porous border with Kenya, allows terrorists to easily travel in and out of Somalia to Somali communities across the world. Cities such as Minneapolis, Stockholm, Cardiff and Dubai, all have large Somali populations, as do neighboring countries like Yemen, Kenya and Ethiopia.

One terrorist who blew himself up in Somalia, Shirwa Ahmed, was an American from Minnesota. Several terrorist attacks in Yemen, including the Sept. 17, 2008, attack on the American Embassy and the recent suicide bombing that targeted Korean tourists, were

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linked to Somalia-trained al Qaeda operatives. The FBI put al Shabab near the top of its list of terrorist groups it believed might attempt to attack the U.S. during President Barack Obama's inauguration.

There are options we can pursue to begin improving the situation. A comprehensive international diplomatic push to stabilize Somalia is crucial. In the meantime, the U.S. has to put in place a regional strategy that encompasses diplomatic, economic, intelligence, law-enforcement and military initiatives aimed at weakening the terrorists and enhancing living conditions for civilians.

The plan may include covert actions against al Shabab leaders and camps; apprehension and prosecution of wanted operatives; increasing aid to the president and his allies if they are determined to be trustworthy; increasing aid to Kenya to help it better police its borders; and an effort to bring neighboring Eritrea and Ethiopia on board. We should also expand the mandate of African Union troops based there. (Western troops are unlikely to be sent to the region because of earlier failed missions.)

This can be done in concert with pressuring al Shabab's foreign supporters. Money flows to the group from wealthy Arab donors, and arms are believed to travel through Eritrea and Yemen.

On Sept. 11, 2001, America learned that a seemingly insignificant far-away country could turn out to be a major threat to our security. If al Qaeda manages to pull off another terrorist attack, there is a strong chance it will be linked to Somalia.

This time we've been warned.

Clinton unveils initiative to combat 'scourge of piracy'

CNN - By Elise Labott

/***** BEGINNING OF SECTION 5 *****/

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15 April 2009

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Wednesday unveiled a diplomatic initiative to thwart attacks on ships off Somalia's coast and combat what she called the "scourge of piracy."

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has called for measures to help combat pirate attacks off Somalia.

Clinton said the State Department will "explore ways to track and freeze pirate assets," similar to measures used against drug traffickers and terrorists.

Noting that the pirates have been buying more sophisticated vessels with the ransom money they have been collecting, Clinton

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said it could be possible to stop boat-building companies from doing business with pirates.

"These pirates are criminals. They are armed gangs on the sea. And those plotting attacks must be stopped, and those who have carried them out must be brought to justice," she told reporters after a meeting with Haitian Prime Minister Michele Duvivier Pierre-Louis.

The United States also will work with shippers and insurers to strengthen their defenses against pirates and will call for immediate meetings of an international counterpiracy task force to expand naval cooperation, Clinton said.

Although she did not suggest the use of military force, she mentioned "going after" pirate land bases in Somalia, which is authorized in a U.N. Security Council resolution passed in December. Watch more of Clinton's comments (-VERTICAL-BAR-)

Clinton said the United States also will seek to beef up the capacity of Somalia's fragile Transitional Federal Government by participating in a donor's conference on Somalia next week in Brussels, Belgium. The State Department also will urge Somali officials and tribal leaders to take action against pirates operating from bases within their territory.

"We have a pretty good idea where the land bases are and we want to know what the Somali government, what tribal leaders who perhaps would not like to have the international community bearing down on them, would be willing to do to rid their territory of these pirate bases," she said.

The steps announced by Clinton are part of a U.S. government-wide effort to grapple with the growing threat posed by pirates, exemplified by last week's capture of the Maersk Alabama and this week's failed attack on another U.S.-flagged ship off the Somali coast.

Clinton said there is a need for a more muscular approach to ending the threat posed by pirates, rather than continuing to tolerate it.

"The modus operandi for a lot of countries and shipping companies up until now has been, 'OK, they hijacked the ship. They get it into port. Nobody's harmed. We pay a ransom. We've done a business calculation. so that's the way it is,'" she said.

But, she added, "The United States does not make concessions or ransom payments to pirates."

Experts Assess Complex Issues Surrounding Piracy Off Somali Coast
VOA - By Andre de Nesnera

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15 April 2009

The recent rescue of an American cargo ship captain held hostage for five days by pirates off the coast of Somalia has heightened awareness of the piracy issue throughout the world.

The London-based International Maritime Bureau, or IMB, an organization that tracks crimes on the high seas, says the waters off Somalia, including the Gulf of Aden, are the most dangerous in the world for international shipping.

The IMB says last year was the most successful ever for the pirates: 111 vessels were attacked in the region, 42 of them were hijacked and 815 crew members held hostage. Analysts say if current trends continue, this year will surpass last year's numbers.

Experts, such as J. Peter Pham with James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia say the waters off the Somali coast are key sea lanes that connect the Indian Ocean with the Red Sea, the Mediterranean and Europe through the Suez Canal.

"Approximately 20,000 ships every year pass through these waters, carrying about 12 percent of the world's oil and more importantly, carries about 80 percent of the commerce between Europe and the Middle East and Asia. So this is a vital artery in international commerce, especially at a time like the one we're in right now - with the economic downturn, any further pressures on international commerce are certainly not needed," he said.

Analysts say the **Somali pirates** target all sorts of vessels: from small pleasure crafts to cargo ships and even giant oil supertankers. Pham says pirates are members of armed gangs.

"Intelligence indicates that there are two primary gangs. One based in the town in Puntland, the northeast autonomous region of Somalia, the town of Eyl. Another gang is based in the south-central Somali town of Haraardheere. And these are the two primary gangs. There are other smaller operators," he said.

Analysts, such as retired U.S. Army Colonel Ralph Peters, say the

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Somali pirates work off so-called "mother ships", searching for potential victims.

"And when they find a likely target, they'll unload speedboats from the hold or have speedboats in tow. And the speedboats, with pirates armed with machine guns and perhaps some RPG-7 type rocket launchers, will skip over the waves and come up on the cargo ship and either threaten it or they'll throw up grappling

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hooks and board it the way pirates do in old movies," he said. Experts say the pirates are not interested in the cargo or the crew - they only want ransom money which can reach several million dollars per vessel.

Peters says the pirates are successful because the crews of the ships being attacked are not armed. He says that is due to insurance issues.

"If ships were to fight back, insurance rates would skyrocket because the insurance companies, the maritime insurers, are looking at what costs the most. And by their calculations, liability claims, actual damage to the ships or cargo might cost more than the \$1 million or \$2- or \$3 million ransom," he said. Peter Chalk, maritime security expert with RAND Corporation, says there's another reason why not to provide weapons to the crew.

"If you had crew members who were armed, it's almost certainly going to encourage greater lethality on the part of the pirates, who may be far more willing to open fire as they board a vessel, in the expectation that they could be met with crews armed with assault rifles. So it is generally thought that to preserve human life, to keep the instance of violence as low as possible, and also for legal reasons, that it's better not to arm crew members," he said.

In an effort to combat piracy off the coast of Somalia, the international community has sent navy ships to patrol the area. The task force includes vessels from the United States and the European Union. Russia, China and India have also ships in the area.

But Chalk says the area is too vast to patrol.

"Basically you've got an area now that if you take into account the wider vicinity of the southern part of the Indian Ocean, you are talking about two million square miles. So it's an enormous area to monitor. You've got an enormous amount of vessels transiting the region. So there's no way that the international naval presence could provide comprehensive security to cover that expanse and all those vessels," he said.

Analysts say a naval presence alone will not eradicate piracy in the region. They say the international community must seriously address the core problem: the lack of an effective government in Somalia - a country described by many analysts as a failed state.

Mozambique: Government Pledges to Solve Problems of Demobilised Soldiers

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AllAfrica - By non-attributed author

15 April 2009

The Mozambican government announced in Maputo on Tuesday that it is working to satisfy the concerns of the tens of thousands of people who were demobilized after the 1992 peace accord signed between the government and the rebel movement Renamo.

Groups claiming to represent the former soldiers have presented a list of 18 demands, which the government is trying to resolve. Some of these concern pensions claimed by the demobilized troops. According to the Permanent Secretary in the Defence Ministry, Teofilo Joao, there are 5,018 pension requests pending, and a further 532 have been sent for approval by the Administrative Tribunal, the body that oversees the legality of public expenditure.

2,186 of these cases are pending because they lack a "service order" from the military, proving that the people concerned were soldiers entitled to pensions. Joao said that 272 of these service orders have now been issued.

A further 1,691 are more delicate in that they are applications from people who should never have been in the army in the first place. They were illegally recruited to the old government army, the FAM/FPLM, during the war when they were under 16 years of age. They were, in sort, child soldiers.

Another 1,163 cases have been ruled out. They are requests from people who do not meet the requirements for any form of military pension.

On top of these cases, there were 3,579 requests which were returned because the former soldiers concerned did not include copies of documents such as their identity card or birth certificate.

Ironically, the complaints about pensions only come from men who were once fighting for the government. Under the demobilization arrangements of 1994, the government agreed to pay pensions to the Renamo demobilized and this has been going smoothly. "The Renamo demobilized have not been presenting concerns because their pensions are being paid normally", said Joao.

The Deputy Minister of Women's Affairs and Social Welfare, Joao Kandiane, who heads the Interministerial Commission set up by the government to deal with the problems of the demobilized, told

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reporters that the government is drawing up a survey to establish

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the exact number of people who were demobilized under the peace agreement.

He suggested that there might be over 100,000 of them, but this number needed confirmation. "Last year the government approved a strategy for the social reinsertion of the demobilized soldiers", he said. "But to implement this strategy we are carrying out a survey to find how many demobilized there are".

This is a truly extraordinary statement, and the figure of over 100,000 is a gross exaggeration. For the demobilization did not take place in an ad-hoc manner, but was supervised by the Ceasefire Commission (CCF), one of several commissions set up under the peace agreement. The government and Renamo were both represented on the commission which was chaired by the United Nations.

On 5 December 1994, the CCF Chairperson, Col Giorgio Segala, presented its final report. This gave the number of demobilised under the peace accord as exactly 78,660.

It is alarming that a man heading a government commission does not possess the basic documentation about the 1994 demobilisation, and is suggesting a figure that is 27 per cent too high.

In the past 15 years, of course, a number of demobilized soldiers will have died of natural causes, and so the current figure will be considerably less than 78,660.

Relative calm continues in Darfur as UN-African force begins rotations

Xinhua - By non-attributed author

15 April 2009

The joint United Nations-African Union (AU) peacekeeping mission in Sudan's war-ravaged Darfur region on Wednesday reported that the security situation remains calm as scheduled troop rotations begin among some units, UN officials said here.

The hybrid operation, which is known as UNAMID and is tasked with quelling violence and protecting civilians, had reported over the past month a rise in attacks on peacekeeping staff, armed banditry, the burning of shelters in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and harassment of civilians.

There has also been concern over the safety of humanitarian workers, many of whom have been ordered to leave the region following the March 4 indictment of Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the region. The rotation of troops in Darfur began on Tuesday with the

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Nigerian Battalion stationed in South Darfur, with a total of 200 personnel arriving while another 200 left the Mission for their home country. South African troops will also be rotated in the next few weeks.

Meanwhile, in the past 24 hours, UNAMID military and police forces conducted nearly 150 patrols covering in and around villages and camps for internally displaced persons, the Mission said.

The hybrid force was set up by the UN Security Council to protect civilians in Darfur, where an estimated 300,000 people have been killed and another 2.7 million have been forced from their homes since fighting erupted in 2003, pitting rebels against government forces and allied Janjaweed militiamen.

More than one year on from transferring the task of suppressing the violence to UNAMID from the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS), well over 12,000 of the 19,555 military personnel authorized by the Security Council are now in place across the region.

ANALYSIS-Pirates, gangs fuel Gulf of Guinea woes

Reuters - By David Lewis

15 April 2009

Africa's Gulf of Guinea nations lack the ability to tackle mounting threats from piracy and kidnapping while the United States, a major buyer of their oil, is restricted in its efforts to help them.

A myriad of local conflicts, heavily armed gangs and weak states along west and central Africa's coast have turned the Gulf Guinea, which will provide a quarter of U.S. oil within 5 years, into a minefield.

Attacks by gunmen operating in the mangrove-lined creeks of Nigeria's Niger Delta have slashed Nigeria's oil output by at least 20 percent and, according to executives, driven the annual cost of oil services-related security there to \$3.5 billion.

But over the last year, other seafaring groups borrowing their tactics and firepower have taken attacks further afield, striking oil platforms, vessels, high-street banks and even Equatorial Guinea's presidential palace. ID:nLF632157

"The incidents of attacks outside Nigeria's territorial waters, especially the shadowy attack on Malabo, have raised eyebrows and concerns," Philippe de Pontet, Middle East and Africa analyst at the Eurasia Group, told Reuters.

"There is pretty serious concern in Washington and capitals elsewhere about the Gulf of Guinea," he said.

The region hosts Nigeria and Angola, sub-Saharan Africa's two

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largest oil producers, Gabon, Cameroon, the two Congos and Equatorial Guinea, an oil nation with aspirations in gas. Oil from land-locked Chad is also exported through the gulf. Sub-Saharan Africa produced more than 9 million barrels of oil per day in 2008 with the Gulf of Guinea nations accounting for nearly 5 million of the total.

The U.S. National Intelligence Council says the region will provide 25 percent of American oil by 2015. According to the International Maritime Bureau, the waters off Nigeria are already the second most dangerous in the world after Somalia.

"SPREADING THREAT"

As in Nigeria, where militants claiming to be fighting for a greater share of the oil wealth are also accused of racketeering and selling oil on the black-market, the lines between political grievances and criminality in the gulf are blurred.

Assaults on banks in Benin, Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea point to organized crime. "They might call themselves freedom fighters but it is hogwash. It's about money," said one diplomat.

"They are learning tricks, getting arms from and, in some cases, mingling with the people in the Delta," he said.

Militants claiming to be fighting against the return of the the oil-rich Bakassi peninsula to Cameroon from Nigeria have sprung up, kidnapping oil workers. Analysts also question why gunmen who attacked Malabo in Equatorial Guinea in February hit the presidential palace rather than soft targets like banks.

"It's quite a tricky mix of operations. I don't think that it is very conclusive yet," said Hannah Koep, West Africa analyst at Control Risks. "(But) this perception of a spreading threat is definitely there."

Having watched violence in Nigeria from the sidelines, governments in the region are now acutely aware of the threat.

"We always thought we were very far from the Delta," said Gabriel Obiang Lima, Equatorial Guinea's vice energy minister.

In light of the Malabo attack, Gabon bolstered its border.

Diplomats say Cameroon has replaced regular army soldiers in Bakassi with special forces answering directly to the president.

Angola, current chair of the Gulf of Guinea Commission, has called for a regional security mechanism to tackle shared threats.

Nigerian and Cameroonian officials now often talk about cooperation on joint strategies.

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But, in a region with simmering oil- and border demarcation disputes, coordination is tricky.

"We do as much as we can inside Equatorial Guinea. But our battle is very big ... If we can't do it with the neighbours, it doesn't help," Lima said, blaming Benin and Cameroon for not being more vocal about attacks on their territory.

The weakness of states in the region has allowed shadowy groups, at times operating off mother ships similar to those used by **Somali pirates**, to move easily in vast stretches of waters.

"Even if regional neighbours are committed to cooperating -- as they have claimed -- it will be very difficult to do it with the current navy capabilities," said Control Risk's Koep.

U.S. INTERVENING WITH HANDS TIED

In a region of former British, French and Spanish colonies, most prominent in efforts to boost local capabilities is the United States, which has a near permanent presence with ships training local security forces.

Peter Pham, a professor at James Madison University in the United States, says this should not be a surprise as the region is already supplying more oil to the U.S. than the Persian Gulf.

"In the longer term, the region is going to be essential," he said, citing an eventual global economic recovery, a lack of new oil and instability in the Middle East, and the continuing threat of conflict in Sudan.

The USS Nashville, a 17,000-tonne warship with 400 crew, is touring the region, hosting training courses on topics ranging from oil platform protection and fire-fighting to maritime law, intelligence gathering and hand-to-hand combat.

But in the Gulf of Guinea, the U.S. faces prickly issues such as sovereignty -- especially after plans to set up a military base in Africa received such a frigid welcome.

"The U.S. is being cautious in terms of its military footprint, even in the waters off Africa ... Once bitten, twice shy," said Eurasia's de Pontet.

Nigerians Fear More Delta Violence Before Elections

VOA By Gilbert da Costa

15 April 2009

Nigeria has lost a quarter of its daily oil production due to attacks on pipelines and terminals and the kidnapping of key staff. Many Nigerians fear an escalation of violence in the oil-rich territory as Africa's most populous country heads for elections in 2011.

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The main militant group in the region, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta said it may resume attacks on security forces if its bases are attacked or the military engages in "punitive invasion" of delta communities involved in recent clashes with the military.

At least 15 people have been killed in clashes between gunmen and security forces in the past three days. Analysts said the security outlook remains extremely volatile and could get worse before elections in 2011.

A presidential committee investigating the Niger Delta said last week that Nigeria lost about \$24 billion to oil theft and sabotage in the first nine months of 2008. The group said about 1,000 people were killed and 300 taken captive in the same period.

Chairman of the presidential panel, Ledum Mitee, said a disarmament program should begin in the Niger Delta now to stem the likelihood of uncontrolled violence.

"We are getting close to elections and the more we can get out the guns from people and deal with real issues, instead of just patronage, the better for us," he said.

President Umaru Yar'Adua made the Niger Delta, with its oil and gas riches, one of his top priorities when he came to office nearly two years ago. But the region remains as violent and poverty-stricken as when he arrived.

The government is working out a plan under which militants could be granted amnesty if they disarm.

Defense Minister Shettima Mustapha said the government is committed to resolving the crisis.

"Ultimately, it is our intention to get to the bottom of these things so that the problem of the Niger Delta is solved once and for all," Mustapha said.

The Niger Delta conflict has simmered for more than a decade. Government crackdowns or offers of peace talks have had little effect on the rebellion.

Mogac seeks US support for Africa

The Daily Free Press (Boston University) - By Kaley Sweeney
15 April 2009

Most African countries just want democracy, something that can be achieved with the help and support of the United States, former president of Botswana and newly-appointed African Presidential

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Archives and Research Center President Festus Gontebanye Mogae said Tuesday night in Boston University's School of Management auditorium.

Mogae discussed Botswana's recent democratic advancements and his hopes for President Barack Obama's African foreign policy in his lecture, "Democratization in Africa: The Case of Botswana, and What Africans Expect from the Obama Administration." Before Mogae presented his lecture, the crowd of more than 200 people attending the lecture gave him a standing ovation.

BOTswana is one of many African countries that want democracy, Mogae said. Sub-Saharan governments continue to push for democracy, and are making strides to improve education, alleviate conflict and promote development.

Although Obama's primary devotion has to be to the American people, Mogae said he still hopes for support and the continuation of relations between the United States and sub-Saharan countries.

Mogae also spoke of Africa's economic situation, stating that he is happy with the United States' initial steps to improve the global economy, but poorer countries' economies cannot be ignored.

"More has to be done to bring relief to Africa and the least-developed countries of the world," he said.

Mogae wants the Group of 20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors, a group of representatives from 19 of the world's largest economies and the European Union who work on restoring financial stability worldwide, to "formulate international coordinated supervisor regulations regarding accounting and disclosure standards throughout Africa," he said. He would also like to see Africa exporting greater goods.

Global warming is also a concern for Africans, who suffer the consequences of climate change despite their minimal contribution to the droughts, high temperatures and other impending climate problems, Mogae said.

BU biostatistics grant manager Cynthia Korhonen, a former immigration attorney, said she found Mogae's lecture informative.

"It was a great opportunity to hear from an exceptional African leader," she said. "Most Americans know so little about Africa. More people should have taken advantage of this."

College of Arts and Sciences sophomore Leonidas Polemis said he was not especially moved by Mogae's lecture.

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"I wasn't compelled by a specific argument," he said. "I thought everything he said was predictable or could be applied to any country in Africa."

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Nick Haigh, a staff member of Grassroots Soccer, a group that uses soccer to teach HIV/AIDS prevention in Africa, said he saw Mogae speak for the second time this week because of his strong interest in his previous lecture on HIV/AIDS.

"He is a powerful speaker," he said. "Fantastic."

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Darfur: relative calm continues as UN-African force begins rotations

15 April - The joint United Nations-African Union (AU) peacekeeping mission in Sudan's war-ravaged Darfur region today reported that the security situation remains calm as scheduled troop rotations begin among some units.

Belgium to donate \$7 million to UN agency to aid poor African farmers

15 April - Poor farmers in four African countries are set to receive \$6.6 million in emergency assistance funding from Belgium, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) announced today.

Liberia: rule of law key to UN efforts to support security, envoy says

15 April - The top United Nations envoy to Liberia today pledged continued support to rule-of-law institutions as the linchpin of efforts to boost security in the country, which is recovering from a brutal 14-year civil war.

UN envoy to Somalia calls for boost in international efforts to fight piracy

15 April - Claiming that piracy off the coast of Somalia is wreaking global havoc, the top United Nations representative for the Horn of Africa country has called for an increase in efforts to fight what he calls an "international scourge."

Somalia: 60,000 return to unstable conditions in capital - UN agency

15 April - The United Nations refugee agency has voiced concern that some 60,000 people uprooted by violence in Somalia have returned to its volatile capital since the beginning of the year.

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