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An open letter to Uncle Sam: America, pray leave Somalia to its own devices

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Abstract

The al-Qaeda-linked Somali insurgent group al-Shabaab has raised alarm in the United States. The proliferation of Somali piracy, too, has US foreign policymakers concerned. This open letter to ‘Uncle Sam’ makes a straightforward case: with the pirates, America should mete out collective punishment; with the terrorists, it should do nothing.

Keywords:

Somalia | al-Shabaab jihadists | Islamic Courts Union (ICU) | Somali piracy | US involvement in Somalia | Somali lineage segmentation | clannism | stateless African societies | collapsed African states | poet Ismaa'iil Mire | Brigadier R. F. Smith

Notes

1. From Mark Twain, a documentary biography directed by Ken Burns, volume 1, 2001.

2. See review of Michela Wrong's It is our turn to eat: The story of a Kenyan whistle-blower, reviewed in the New York Review of Books, 14 March 2010, LVII, no. 1: 35-8.

3. Ahmed Nasser Abdi, personal interview, South Orange, NJ, summer 2009.

4. See the bibliography of Andrew Wapner's Master's thesis supervised by this writer, History Department, Rutgers University, March 2010.

5. Mohammad H. Hussein ‘Sheeka-Hariir’, Fieldnotes interview, 25 February 1977.

6. Said M. M. Shire - more popularly known as Said Suugaan, or Said Culture on account of his amazingly vast collection of Somaliana books, magazines and archival material - kindly gave a copy of Ismaa'iil Mire's poem Osma Oga.

7. In the port town of Kisimayu, 2008.

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