



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on July 27, 2012

U.S. Drones Spotted Over Somalia; Pres. Obama Issues Executive Order

Not a single day passes without a new story about the increase in the global and domestic use of drones.

On July 24, [the Washington Post published an article](#) describing the congestion of the skies over Somalia caused by drone traffic. The situation is so bad, says the *Post*, that there is a “danger to air traffic” in the area.

An additional problem posed by the proliferation of the unmanned aircraft above the east African nation is that their presence might be evidence of a violation of a [1992 United Nations Security Council arms embargo](#) still in effect.



The article in the *Post* cites a UN report in which officials of the international body recount several instances where collisions between drones and commercial aircraft or objects on the ground were “narrowly averted.” One such incident involved a drone and a passenger plane flying above Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia.

The authors of the report of the investigation did not directly implicate the United States. That said, the report indicated that “at least two of the unmanned aircraft appeared to be U.S.-manufactured and suggested that Washington has been less than forthcoming about its drone operations in Somalia.”

According to the report, there have been 64 unauthorized drone deployments, fighter jet missions or attack helicopter flights recorded in Somalia since June 2011. At least 10 of the documented flights involved drones.

While the U.S. military keeps mum about its use of drones around the world, it is known that drones are deployed and launched from American military bases in Djibouti, the Seychelles, and Ethiopia. In fact, in a statement released in June, the Obama administration admitted that it “is engaged in a robust range of operations to target Al-Qaeda and associated forces, including in Somalia.”

In 2011, the military acknowledged that as part of that operation a drone strike was launched against two suspected leaders of al-Shabaab, an alleged al-Qaeda affiliate based in Somalia. Again, the use of these drones and the firing of missiles at militants seemingly violates the 1992 embargo, as drones carrying Hellfire missiles are inarguable used for uses that are “exclusively military,” in direct contravention of the terms of the embargo.

The story in the *Post* indicates that the Pentagon is not bothered by accusations of breaking the embargo. To the contrary, the article claims that the U.S. military intends to deploy additional drones in the region, including the supplying of eight hand-launched Raven drones to Kenyan forces stationed in Somalia as part of the African Union mission.

While the overlords at the UN are aware and approve of the sale of small low-flying drones to the



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African Union troops, the reports of high-altitude large Predator and Reaper drones are not covered by any exception to the embargo. While the U.S. military should take no orders from the United Nations, it is curious that the global body will deign to permit the United States to supply drones to the armed forces operating under the blue UN flag, while forbidding their use by the American military.

The documented increase in the use of drones in Somalia — many, if not most, of which are believed to belong to the United States — coincides with the missions being carried out in the area by Special Operations units and their CIA cohorts. The *Post* reports that these operatives “have gradually stepped up secret missions inside Somalia to rescue hostages and hunt for al-Shabab leaders.”

Perhaps there is more to the crescendo of American military activity in Somalia than is being discussed. On July 20, [President Obama issued another of his nearly weekly executive orders](#), this one aiming to cripple the power of “terrorists” in Somalia.

President Obama writes in his edict that he intends to address this emergency by cutting off “exports of charcoal from Somalia, which generate significant revenue for al-Shabaab.”

Apparently, al-Shabaab relies on the sale of charcoal to finance its attacks on the African Union soldiers and the government of Somalia. Burned pieces of wood seem a very flimsy foundation upon which to build a terrorist organization capable of threatening global stability and peace, as indicated by President Obama’s executive order. [According to a fact sheet issued by the Treasury Department](#), charcoal is a “significant revenue source for al-Shabaab.”

“It is crucial that the trade in charcoal from Somalia be prohibited to diminish this source of al-Shabaab’s revenue and further discourage the group from engaging in terrorist acts,” the fact sheet declares.

The fact sheet includes a statement by another Treasury Department official. “By expanding our ability to impose sanctions on those engaged in despicable acts of violence in Somalia, the United States is once again demonstrating its full support for the Somali people,” said Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David S. Cohen. “We are also taking aim, in coordination with the international community, to cut off a key source of revenue for al-Shabaab.”

Of course, one mustn’t overlook the green angle in the war against international terrorism. The sale of charcoal by al-Shabaab, the Treasury Department insists, “has led to environmental degradation that has contributed to the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the Horn of Africa.”

Apart from the environmental considerations, there is likely another, more enduring and long-range goal in the issuing of this executive order.

Section 1 (a) (2) of the order purports to block the assets of any person who commits “acts that threaten the Transitional Federal Institutions or future Somali governing institutions, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), or other future international peacekeeping operations related to Somalia.”

Is the president laying the groundwork for future overt American military operations in Somalia? Is this asset grab an attempt to pave the way for “regime change” and the facilitation of the imposition of a new government approved by the White House?

In order to stop the “deterioration of the security situation and the persistence of violence in Somalia,” the president has authorized the secretaries of state and treasury “to take such actions, including the promulgation of rules and regulations, and to employ all powers granted to the President ... as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of this order. The Secretary of the Treasury may redelegate any of



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these functions to other officers and agencies of the United States Government consistent with applicable law. All agencies of the United States Government are hereby directed to take all appropriate measures within their authority to carry out the provisions of this order.

As authority for these actions, President Obama cites “United Nations Security Council Resolution 2036 of February 22, 2012, and Resolution 2002 of July 29, 2011” in addition to the powers “vested in [him] as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America.”

Once again, a president of the United States is subrogating the Constitution with resolutions passed by the unelected, unaccountable, and unconstitutional Security Council of the United Nations.



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