



ETHIOPIA: ENDLESS CAMPAIGN OF DISINFORMATION

In the last issue of its bulletin, “Week in the Horn”, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, falsely alleges that Eritrea provided “a plane load of weapons and medical supplies to Al-Shabaab in Kismayo... at the same time as President Isaias was talking to Mr. Pascoe (the UN Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs) and Ambassador Mahiga”, (the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Somalia). The statement goes further to claim: “about thirty wounded Al-shabaab fighters, including five foreigners, were then loaded onto the plane flown back to Asmara... An Eritrean official who flew down from Asmara in the plane also traveled to Afgoye to meet with Sheik Aweys.” To give a semblance of “credence” to these preposterous accusations, the Ministry attributes the story to anonymous “sources close to Al-Shabaab.”

This is not the first time the Foreign Ministry’s weekly bulletin is peddling propaganda against Eritrea. For reasons better known to Ethiopia, the misinformation campaign seems to have increased in the past few weeks with a litany of lopsided editorials on the well-known rulings of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission, the Qatar mediation process, as well as innuendos and outright lies on the visits of foreign dignitaries to Eritrea. Dignifying these malicious distortions and/ or groundless accusations with responses will not serve any purpose and Eritrea has not bothered to address them.

The timing and intent behind this “Al-Shebaab” story has, however, two dimensions that must be addressed to put the record straight. Ethiopia Foreign Ministry has fabricated this story this week precisely in order to misinform and wrongly influence the Somalia Monitoring Group that is

touring the Horn of Africa region and who arrived in Asmara this Sunday (Septmebr 12). The other probable reason might have to do with Ethiopia's desire and pending plans to intervene again in Somalia. Indeed, when Ethiopia invaded Somalia in December 2006, to oust the UIC of the same Sheik Sherif that was then accused of extremism and is now embraced as "moderate", one of the pretexts it peddled was Eritrea's deployment in Somalia of 2000 troops. Unfortunately, this total fabrication was not properly verified at the time and recycled as truth even by the Somalia Monitoring Group. We see now the same tape being played again.

In conclusion, as Eritrea has repeatedly explained, the crises in Somalia can only be solved through an all inclusive political peace process. Ethiopia's repeated and failed invasions of Somalia and other political machination to keep Somalia weak and fragmented have not only proven futile but become a source of the problem rather than its solution.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Asmara

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