

## **U.S. BACKED MILITIA WENT TO WAR AGAINST AL-SHABAB: HOW SMART WAS THAT?**



Peace and Counter-Terrorism. The [ARPCT](#) were a coalition of Mogadishu's notorious warlords propped up by the U.S to defeat the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), but to no avail. In 2006, American bankrolled Ethiopia against the Somali Islamist hoping to quell political Islam in Somalia, and ironically, out of the wreckage emerged a stronger contender, Al-Shabab. In 2007, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) was deployed to Mogadishu to eradicate Al-Shabab and after a decade the Al-Qaeda affiliated Islamic group has proven to be stronger and more resolute than ever. More

recently, the United States has once again resorted to local proxies in their never-ending war on terror, this time in the form of tribal militias known as Ma'awisley.

Militarily, the Ma'awisley's battlefield experience and tribal fervor initially earned them battlefield victories as they were hailed by state media and politicians as the saviors of the Somali people and the long-awaited heroes who would finally rid Somalia of Al-Shabab. Fighting alongside a coalition of American, African and Somali forces, the



The slayed former Macawisley leader, Cilmi Hagar Guure.

Ma'awisley militia were able to capture few villages, but the events that succeeded that transitory victory were disastrous in nature.

Al-Shabab, battle-hardened and with more than 15 years' experience in the art of guerilla warfare, overran the coalition forces military bases in the towns of Hawadley, Hilowle Gab, Yasoman, Galad, El-Qoxle, El-Bacad, Ru-Nirgod, Burdar, Qayib, Daru-Nicmah, Bud-Bud and Masaga-Waa. To add insult to injury, the group also documented the attacks and published the images of dead coalition forces, prisoners of war, military vehicles, guns and ammunitions captured during the raid.

Once again, it was America's miscalculated foreign policy that got Ma'awisley militias out of the grazing land and in the battlefields' deep trenches. On their part, it was empty tribal slogans, false promises and deceptive US and Somali polices that prompted them to be war dogs for Washington's war. After repeated setbacks and military defeats in the battlefield, most of the Ma'awisley militias regretted their misguided venture and went back to their traditional nomadic life. Some have even surrendered to Al-Shabab.

After winning a highly contested presidential election which was marred with the usual corruption indicative of Somali politics, President Hasan Mohamud outlined a three-point strategy against Al-Shabab: counter their ideology, hit them militarily, and choke off their finances. Though these were indeed strategic and effective goals theoretically, yet the fruition of this plan on the ground seemed fanciful.

At the ideological front, the president assembled the Council of Islamic Scholars to discredit Al-Shabab in a highly televised seminar, yet state clerics were unable to set aside their sectarian disputes that, perhaps need an entire lifetime to resolve. Though the convention had Islamic flavor but the impetus was money, prominence, and to promote a 'democratized' version of Islam. After few rounds of "*Al-Shabab are Khawarij*" in full throat, the Ma'awisley militia were baptized as a force of good and Al-Shabab was declared a heretic cult.

Yet after after numerous humiliating defeats, President Mohamud, once optimistic and exuberant in his ambitions of victory, has now toned down his crys of war and fiery speeches against the Islamist group, abashedly admitting that a military solution alone, regardless of how local or foreign it maybe, cannot defeat an Islamist insurgency. A lesson that America learned in Afghanistan after twenty years, two trillion dollars and the death of thousands of its troops.

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