

Ugandans to the rescue



9/30/2010

When bombs went off at the Kyadondo Rugby Club and the Ethiopian Village Restaurant in Kampala on the night of Sunday July 11, 2010, the early blame was put on the Somali militant group Al-Shabab.

Later, the international consensus was that it was indeed Al-Shabab. (The Uganda Record refused and still refuses to take that view.) Suddenly, it seemed, the pressure that had been exerted on President Yoweri Museveni by the U.S. administration over electoral reform and the rampant abuse of human rights was off.

The opposition political parties in Uganda would now be rendered irrelevant and Museveni would earn maximum political capital from the bombings.

The United States would see in Museveni an ally in the "war on terror"

The assumption was that he would play host to a stream of U.S. generals, planning with him an assault on Al-Shabab. Entebbe's airforce base would be filled with C-5 Galaxy transport planes bringing in equipment around the clock.

Two weeks after the bombings, on Sunday July 25, the African Union summit opened in Kampala. The original agenda on women's health and child mortality was pushed aside and terrorism became the dominant theme.

Guinea and Djibouti pledged troops to the African Union peacekeeping force in Mogadishu. The rest of the African heads of state and government were silent on this.

When the alleged Ugandan masterminds of the July 11 bombings were produced before the Ugandan media by the Chief of Military Intelligence, Brig. James Mugira, there did not seem much interest by the U.S. embassy in Kampala or by the Washington administration in these young men.

The Ugandan media would have been fed reports by the state that the FBI was not interrogating these so-called self-confessed terrorists, had the FBI taken interest in them. Nothing of the sort has happened.

What has happened is that Museveni is back right where he was before the bomb blasts in Kampala. He has not yet been welcomed to the White House by President Barack Obama.

He has been reported in the East African media as asking for funding to fight Al-Shabab but does not seem to be getting any pledges. Uganda is noisily stating its plans to deploy a further 2,000 and then 10,000 troops to Somalia, presumably in the hope of attracting western support for this show of dedication to the anti-terrorism cause.

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This public gesture is so far going unnoticed.

When Al-Shabab attacked the Muna Hotel in Mogadishu on Aug. 24, the New Vision newspaper in Kampala made it front-page news, perhaps in the hope of reminding the world of the threats Uganda still faces and by this, hopefully leverage Museveni to the West.

That still did not happen.

The sum total, then, is that the July 11 bombings came and went and the expected political windfall that most pundits had assumed Museveni would reap had not happened.

The conniving dictator did it again and got away with it, Are we gona let him get off?
END