

US Bombed Somalia Amid Russian Invasion of Ukraine

Wednesday 2 March 2022, by [STANCIL Kenny](#) (Date first published: 25 February 2022).

“You do not, in fact, have to choose between American and Russian imperialisms,” wrote one anti-war reporter. “The correct choice is to detest and resist both.”

Just before Russian President Vladimir Putin [launched](#) his full-scale military assault on Ukraine, which has drawn accusations of potential [war crimes](#) and received global [condemnation](#), the United States hit Somalia with the latest [drone attack](#) in its 15-year war against the impoverished nation.

“The ongoing horrors of a protracted war matter as much as the fresh horrors of a new one.”

In a statement released Wednesday, the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) [said](#) its Tuesday airstrike targeted suspected al-Shabab militants “after they attacked partner forces in a remote location near Duduble.”

The first known U.S. airstrike in Somalia in 2022 was the fifth since the start of President Joe Biden’s tenure in the White House.

“Before him, Donald Trump escalated the U.S. war in Somalia like no one else had, bombing the country more in the first two years of his presidency than Barack Obama had in eight, all the way up to [January 19, 2021](#),” journalist and author Spencer Ackerman [wrote](#) Thursday on his *Forever Wars* blog. “George W. Bush plunged the U.S. into conflict in Somalia in the first place in 2006.”

Ackerman continued:

I hesitate to call Somalia a forgotten war. I write in [Reign of Terror](#) that calling it forgotten implies its receiving public attention in the first place. Shortly before I wrote the book, I learned that the House Armed Services Committee had never issued any study of a war that was more than a decade old. There is neither expectation nor effort to articulate a strategy that can bring this circumstance to a conclusion. There isn’t even pressure for the most basic oversight.

With minimal spillage of U.S. blood, treasure and less media attention, a war like the one the U.S. wages in Somalia can persist as long as there is funding for it. In Washington, there is nothing more than a vacant shrug of the shoulders and a numb assumption that whatever it is the U.S. is doing must be the best of bad options. After 15 years, AFRICOM doesn’t need to justify the operation beyond signing off with “violent extremist organizations like al-Shabab present long-term threats to the U.S. and regional interests.”

Writing as Russia’s [bombardment](#) of Ukraine killed dozens of civilians and produced thousands of refugees, Ackerman stressed that he was not engaging in “facile whataboutism.”

"I don't think there's any whataboutism necessary," argued Ackerman. "You do not, in fact, have to choose between American and Russian imperialisms. The correct choice is to detest and resist both, with emphasis placed on resisting your own state's aggression, since you stand the greatest chance of success against something justified in your name."

Spare a thought for Somalia this week as the US bombs it for the first time in 2022 and the latest time in a 15-year old war that never received enough attention for it to qualify as a Forgotten War. <https://t.co/L2DWpIH8Tp>

— Spencer Ackerman (@attackerman) [February 24, 2022](#)

Jacobin's Europe editor David Broder made a similar point Thursday, [arguing](#) that progressives should vehemently oppose a U.S. military response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine—and what he characterized as the [reckless foreign policies](#) that made it more likely.

While "Putin was not driven to invade by Western threat or by a small but militant [far-right minority in Ukraine](#)," wrote Broder, "it should clearly be recognized that Western actions have helped prepare the way."

"This is not only because NATO's post-1991 expansion has encircled Russia or empowered its militarists to claim that lands devastated during World War II are again under threat," he noted. "More than that, Putin's claim to stand up for minorities in the Donbas draws on a now well-worn playbook of 'humanitarian' intervention."

According to Broder:

To observe that those who destroyed Iraq, Libya, and Yugoslavia have no standing to condemn him is not an exercise in "both-sidesism." The likes of Blair, Clinton, Trump, and Putin have often been on one same side, through [material collaboration](#) in the [War on Terror](#) and in their common undermining of the international law which they all claim to uphold. Time and again, Washington has allied with despots, come to see them as unreliable, then launched military offensives against them that succeeded only in spreading chaos. The Left has every duty to remember these disasters—and prevent them from being repeated in the present.

Ackerman, meanwhile, asserted that as long as the U.S. military drops bombs around the world, "it will need to be written about, especially since there has never been anything more than sporadic U.S. reporting on the Somalia war. It needs to be written about now because it happened now."

"That is not to say or imply that coverage of Ukraine is inappropriate," he added. "There is a Russian assault on Ukraine and that must be [covered](#). It is instead to say that the ongoing horrors of a protracted war matter as much as the fresh horrors of a new one."

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