

Newsweek: Fake, Fluff and Fiction

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The once venerable weekly magazine owned by the Washington Post Company suffered a precipitous decline and was sold to the digital news company International Business Times (IBT) in 2010.

Today, the iconic brand has lost both its reputation and reach and looks like it is more concerned about increasing page views, by producing sensationalized stories, than producing factual news reports. Just like its sister the IBT Times, Newsweek has been churning fake reports about Eritrea, with hopes of adding to its readership.

These fake stories on Eritrea seem to come right on cue-every time the minority regime in Ethiopia finds itself in some self-made quagmire. So what happened? What triggered the rushed, not to mention inaccurate and tabloid-like, posts this time? Two possible reasons...

The minority regime 1. is facing yet more nationwide protests and needs a diversion from its domestic affairs-its handlers and lobbyists believe they can elevate the regime's stature only by undermining that of Eritrea's in the Horn of Africa. Eritrea is their favorite scapegoat.

Ethiopia is going to hold 2. the Presidency of the UN Security Council in September, and probably wants to use yet another baseless allegation- to prolong the illegal, unjust sanctions against Eritrea.

So what do the two of Newsweek articles say? Not much and nothing new or news worthy can be found. The authors have simply cut and paste information laundered on the internet to put together incoherent posts, hoping to get hits for their dwindling site, using sensational headlines.

Conor Gaffey's report, "U.S. Should Fight Terror With Eritrea, Accused of Sponsoring Al-Qaeda Affiliate, GOP Congressman Says", was published online on 7 August 2017. The headline was supposed to garner some traffic.... it failed miserably. Since that did not get the traction its sponsors wanted, another piece, with yet another sensational headline, "PIRATES OF THE CALIPHATE: WHO IS THE SOMALI KINGPIN ACCUSED OF AIDING AL SHABAB? Was by Jack Moore on 17 August 2017. The contents of both articles are fiction, fluff and fake. They

offer readers no real information and worse, the stench of the minority regime in Ethiopia and its handler's (as the only beneficiaries of the fake reports) reeks a mile away...

Conor Gaffey is apparently trying to mock Dana Rohrabacher, a US Congressman from California, for calling for US engagement with Eritrea. He provides this as a reason why the US should not do so:

- **“...since 2009, Eritrea has been under U.N. Security Council sanctions for allegedly supporting Al-Shabab rebels in Somalia...The State Department also announced sanctions on the Eritrean navy in April. The decision followed a report by a U.N. sanctions monitoring body which found a shipment of North Korean–made military communications equipment leaving Pyongyang, North Korea, for Eritrea in 2016. The United States prohibits trading in certain military equipment with North Korea under a nonproliferation law. The Eritrean government slammed the sanctions as “inexplicable.” ...”**

Had Gaffey done his homework, he would have understood why the Eritrean government found the sanctions to be “inexplicable”. He would not have to search far to know that Ethiopia has in fact bought arms from North Korea, with tacit approval of Washington.

So what has Rohrabacher done to warrant Ethiopia's ire? Recalling that the US was one of the guarantors and witnesses of the Algiers Agreements signed in 2000 between Eritrea and Ethiopia, Rohrabacher spoke out against US' silence as Ethiopia violated the terms of the Agreements and continues its 16 year occupation of sovereign Eritrean territories, including Badme. In 2014, Rohrabacher spoke very candidly about US Policy vis a vis the regime in Ethiopia:

- **“...I thought the behavior of our government in that whole episode [the Eritrea-Ethiopia border dispute] was disgraceful, and has undermined our ability to arbitrate other disputes... Let's just note that, we did convince the Ethiopians at one point to agree to arbitration of a major dispute that they were in with Eritrea,” the congressman said. Then when “the decision of the arbiters went against Ethiopia in their border dispute with Eritrea...and we extracted some kind of other deal with them to help us with some sort of defense related deal...and let them off the hook, basically said they didn't have to follow their arbitration...”**

Most recently, speaking at a hearing on Ethiopia on 27 July 2017, Rohrabacher said the murder, repression and torture perpetrated by the minority regime in Ethiopia was offensive to American values. He said that the minority regime in Ethiopia:

- **“...arrogantly expects the U.S. to continue good relationships with it and perhaps expect to get some type of aid...This is a corrupt regime that is oppressive and brutal to its own people. Its corruption spills beyond its borders...What we have is a dictatorship that knows no bounds...”**

Rohrabacher’s sentiments are shared by many of his colleagues on both sides of the aisle. It should be recalled that just a few months back, in May 2017 U.S. Senators Marco Rubio (R-FL) and Ben Cardin (D-MD) introduced a Senate resolution condemning excessive use of force by Ethiopian security forces that led to hundreds of deaths, and the sponsors of the Senate Resolution on Ethiopia called on the minority regime to release all political opposition, dissidents, activists, and journalists and to respect the rights enshrined in its constitution. Senator Rubio said:

- **“...As the Ethiopian government continues to stall on making progress on human rights and democratic reform, it is critical that the United States remains vocal in condemning Ethiopia’s human rights abuses against its own people...I will continue to work with my colleagues in the Senate to urge the Ethiopian government to respect the rule of law and prioritize human rights and political reform...”**

Senator Ben Cardin echoed similar sentiments:

- **“...The Ethiopian government must make progress on respecting human rights and democratic freedoms. I am deeply troubled by the arrest and ongoing detention of a number of prominent opposition political figures. The fact that we have partnered with the Ethiopian government on counterterrorism does not mean that we will stay silent when it abuses its own people...On the contrary, our partnership means that we must speak out when innocent people are detained, and laws are used to stifle legitimate political dissent...”**

I suppose Rohrabacher is being singled out for proposing US engagement with Eritrea... US engagement with Eritrea is something the minority regime in Ethiopia dreads more than the plague itself.

Conor Gaffey fails to tell his readers that NONE of the allegations made by Ethiopia and its partners, who engineered the illegal, unfair and unjust UN sanctions against the State of Eritrea and its people, were ever verified. He also neglects to tell his readers that despite millions of dollars being spent on “investigations” by the Somalia Eritrea Monitoring Group (SEMG), which has produced voluminous reports on Eritrea, has ever produced an iota of evidence to support the preposterous allegations made by Ethiopia and its partners. It has also stated unequivocally in four consecutive reports that it has found no evidence to support the allegation that Eritrea provided any support to Al Shabbab. This is not the first time that the US State Department has wrongly sanctioned Eritrea based on faulty intelligence and outright lies...

A few weeks back, the Ethiopian Embassy and its million dollar lobbyists, SGR LLC, put on a grand “by invitation only”, presentation in Congress, hoping to sway lawmakers, many of whom have distanced themselves away from the minority regime that is killing its own people. Calls, such as the one made by Rohrabacher make it nervous. It wants to remain Washington’s sole “staunch ally” in the region.

The report posted by Jack Moore is yet another desperate attempt to link Eritrea with some investigation on a Somali pirate, who is the main subject of the report. Moore says:

- **“...A former senior U.N. official, speaking on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to speak about the investigation, was more specific, telling Newsweek that the probe into Garfanji centers on “Djiboutian allegations that he received arms from Eritrea and channeled them” to Al- Shabab...”**

Thanks for the head up...

First of all, Eritrea has no links to Al Shabab and has never provided any support to the group. Secondly, any information provided by Djibouti about Eritrea should be taken with a grain of salt, as it is one of the countries that colluded with Ethiopia to engineer the illegal sanctions against Eritrea in 2009 and has a vested interest in seeing them prolonged. Djibouti and Ethiopia have left no stones unturned to maintain the illegal sanctions and have gone to great lengths to fabricate evidence which members of the UN Security Council have repeatedly rejected, but were no doubt emboldened by the support they received from Susan Rice, the former US Ambassador to the United Nations, who worked with Meles Zenawi to engineer the “stand alone” sanctions regime against Eritrea.

Despite the fact that the many outlandish allegations made against Eritrea over the last 15 years, none were ever substantiated, but the stigma and the erroneous reports on the internet persist. The series of article on Newsweek and the latest by Moore and Gaffey just add to the media scrum on Eritrea that litters cyberspace and prevents sober analysis and honest responsible reporting on the country. As we read posts about Eritrea by various media outlets, we are forced to ask some questions...who benefits from the report? After 15 years of evil reports filled with distortion of facts, fabrications and patently false information, Eritrea has been wronged by the western media, the NGO community and self-styled “experts”. Evil reports such as the two above mentioned reports by Newsweek, have defiled many minds over the years...

Another entity that is being used by Ethiopia and others in their campaigns against Eritrea is the reference to the “UN” or to “UN reports”, to give credence to the lies and distortions in the various news items posted. For the record, there are no “UN reports” that claim Eritrea supports Al Shabbab. The reports are produced by the Somalia Eritrea Monitoring Group (SEMG) and it has been found to be fallible. Its sources-usually Ethiopia-have made allegations that have never been substantiated. Ditto for the accusations at the UN Human Rights Council. The Special Rapporteur reproduced accusations and allegations made by Ethiopia, and her recommendations were rejected by the UN Human Rights Council in June 2016, and again in October 2016, at the UN Third Committee. Yet the western media continue to say “Eritrea has been accused by the UN”...shameless.

But it is not only Eritrea’s reputation that is being sullied by such reports. They undermine the credibility and integrity of the news outlet and in this case, Newsweek. Moore and Gaffey, both too young to know anything about Eritrea, its history and its post-independence challenges, are typical of the tech savvy online journalists today-where expediency trumps truth. Unfortunately, instead of raising Newsweek’s profile, they have succeeded in further eroding its already fledgling reputation. The once revered magazine has lost its appeal, and as Joseph Farah of the World Net Daily put it:

- **“...this is the Newsweek that lives on the fumes of that legacy, the Newsweek that would have long ago gone out of business had the name alone not earned a degree of respect...they should rename the magazine Newsweek...”**

As one of the most widely read magazines around the world, Newsweek ought to know that, whether in print or on the internet, readers want to be better informed...with verifiable facts, and not have their intelligence insulted with tabloid like cheap productions...

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