



"Moon of the South", an obscure weekly magazine, published excerpts of an interview with Francois Bozize, the deposed President of the Central African Republic in its April 4 edition this month. The reporter, a certain Issa Sikiti Da Silva, quotes the former CAR President who stated that "Chad helped Seleka rebels to overthrow" his government.

But then, the reporter gratuitously impugns Eritrea to claim that "the arms used by the Seleka rebels during the final assault on the presidential palace were purchased from Eritrea and transited by Chad with the permission of Deby". The author does not provide a shred of evidence for his outlandish statement. He simply cites "Le Journal de Brazza" as a source to add: "Eritrea, a rogue state badly hit by EU and US sanctions (sic), has a history of arming African rebel groups, including Somalia's Al-Shabab".

It is indeed the familiar terrain. Part of this invective can be explained by sloppy, cut-and-paste, journalism where reporters heedlessly parrot and recycle news items without ascertaining their veracity. On the other hand, it may be part and parcel of the deliberate defamation and demonization campaigns that the arch-enemies of Eritrea have intensified in the past months.

Be that as it may, the Foreign Ministry wishes to highlight the following points in order to put the record straight:

1. Eritrea has neither the political will nor the material and logistical capabilities to sell/deliver arms to rebels in CAR and/or "other African rebel groups". In the first place, Eritrea does not manufacture weapons and/or ammunitions of any kind. Furthermore, Eritrea has remained under an unlawful arms embargo for the last three years. It would not thus be in a position, even hypothetically, to sell and transfer arms to CAR rebels or Chad with whom it does not share contiguous territory; (the reporter does not even appear to know the geography of the region).

2. The fabricated story will no doubt be peddled in the same fashion and for the same purposes

as previous invectives. In November 2011, for instance, Eritrea was falsely accused by Kenya for delivering arms to Al-Shabab in Somalia through the airport of Baidowa. The story was proven to be false later. But still, it continued to be quoted by various news wires as well as human rights groups and assorted detractors of Eritrea. The transparent trick is to plant a false story somehow in the wicked knowledge that it will be recycled and "ultimately stick as something probable or credible". These cheap acts must not be tolerated.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Asmara

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