

Monica-Missiles : Coincidences or Clash of Civilisations?

by Ahmed Ziauddin

In his public broadcast, Clinton said, this was not an attack against Islam. But it seems, he already has started what American Jewish pundit Professor Huntington described as "clash of civilisations".

UNITED States military carried out missile attacks on Afghanistan and Sudan on 20 August 1998. The attacks were conducted from US ships off Pakistan coast on Arabian Sea and Red Sea. The weapons employed were Tomahawk cruise missiles, used profusely during the Gulf War in 1991. About hundred missiles hit six sites in eastern Afghanistan and a pharmaceutical plant in Sudan's capital.

After the attacks, US President justified it in a public address. He said, the attacks were a pre-emptive measure and retaliatory actions for bombing US missions in Kenya and Tanzania. He said, "Let our actions today send this message loud and clear — there are no expendable American targets". He claimed that, "Our mission was clear — to strike at the network of radical groups affiliated with, and funded by, Osama bin Laden, the pre-eminent organiser and financier of international terrorism in the world today".

As the attacks were being conducted, thousands of miles away, in a Washington court room, Monica Lewinsky, a former White House unpaid intern, was giving testimony before the grand jury for the second day. The grand jury is investigating the nature of sexual relations Monica had with President Clinton and whether he lied under oath about their relationship or encouraged anyone else to do so.

The independent Counsel Ken Starr, meanwhile requested DNA sample from the President. He received the samples from Bethesda Naval Hospital, which stores the President's blood for emergency supply. Earlier, Monica handed over a stained blue dress to Ken Starr which is now being tested at FBI's crime laboratory.

According to news reports, the President, who himself appeared before the same grand jury under special arrangement, admitted for the first time that Monica performed oral sex on him. He refused to provide answers to other graphic questions about their

sexual encounters. President Clinton, over the last eight months, steadfastly denied having any sexual relationship with Monica. He denied the relationship while giving testimony in a sexual harassment case filed by his former employee Paula Jones. After the grand jury deposition, Clinton appeared before American public and partially admitted about the relationship. The general consensus is that President had sex with Monica, and he lied on oath. The opposition Republicans are vying for his blood by initiating impeachment procedure, because of this lie.

Mere Coincidences?

Are President's predicaments and the missiles coincidence? The answer, in all probability, is no. It has happened before. When Clinton is cornered at home, he creates an international crisis. This has been the habit of Presidents. For some years, the scapegoat has been the evil man Saddam. Only few months back, under a similar scenario, he sent thousands of US soldiers, scores of ships to Gulf to teach Saddam a lesson. His military muscle, flexing drew attention of all the world's press away. He was denied the opportunity by excellent diplomacy of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. This time around, the US administration was preparing to heat up the Iraq non-cooperation issue with UN inspectors; but luck smiled at him. Explosions took place in Tanzania and Kenya. He got what he was looking for, enough to divert eyes off from his sexual scandal. The world and more importantly, US media now full of news, pictures, analysis of US attacks.

A New Kind of War

The US attack on Afghanistan and Sudan has created a new kind of war between the countries. The boundaries of war has now been extended. The war now has new definition. So far, a State would have attacked another State, but now US President says, the devastating missiles were aimed at a single person and his

group. The missiles were intended to carry US message that no place is safe for terrorists, as defined by US. US admitted that no warning was given before the attacks, the sovereignty of the two countries were violated, without those countries having had any say in the matter. In this war, the frontier is the rest of the world, where US can seek out any individual anywhere without regard to the country in question.

US has not said that embassy bombings, which were the immediate pretext of these attacks, were carried out either by Sudan or Afghanistan, or that the governments of these two countries sponsored these particular acts. Nevertheless, US has attacked.

These attacks have established a new kind of precedent, that a State can wage a war against a country even when there are no disputes between them.

Friend Turned Foe

The US President said, he has got enough intelligence reports to suggest that Osama bin Laden was involved in the embassy bombings. He was about to have a meeting of his followers on the day of the attack with about 600 people. The meeting would have discussed future and further attacks on American people and on interests. However, the President has yet to produce any tangible evidence to substantiate his claim.

The question which remains unanswered is, if US intelligence was so sure about all movements of Osama bin Laden, how could he carried out such devastating attacks without US knowing about it? The US was watching him, and even Clinton referred Osama bin Laden's latest pronouncement on US government. A grand jury was also looking to indict him.

The US should know more about him and his network.

method of work etc.; because it was USA which made Osama bin Laden a "pre-eminent" person he is now. He was a war hero, in the eye of USA, when Soviets occupied Afghanistan. The camps, which was hit by US missiles, were made of US money, where "terrorists" were being produced with US funds, and the production of terrorists have continued, only the targets have changed. Instead of Soviet Union, terrorists now aim at USA. The friend had turned in

country from occupying atheist Soviets. And he was successful in organising an effective campaign. Now he considers USA an occupying force, with its huge military establishment in Saudi Arabia and Saudi regime as "a branch or agent of US".

His reply to CNN reporter Peter Arnett in March 1997 said all. He said, "We declared jihad against the US government, because the US government is unjust, criminal and tyrannical. It has committed acts that are

block on to the puzzle. Legality of US attacks : USA has cited both national and international law to justify these attacks.

US Justice Department maintains that the attacks were authorised under the Constitution of USA and Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act passed in 1996. The Act says, "The President should use all necessary means, including covert action and military force, to disrupt, dismantle and destroy international infrastructure used by international terrorists, including overseas terrorist training facilities and safe havens."

At the UN, Bill Richardson, US Ambassador to UN, informed the Security Council that the United States acted in self-defence, in accordance with the UN Charter.

There are serious reservations about the validity of US attacks in law. The law on anti-terrorism, appears to have extra territorial effects, which authorises the US President to impose his judgement on other countries. The fundamental question is, can a US legislature legislate anything whose dictates cross beyond the US borders? The US legislature is not an international forum and as such, cannot pass laws with repercussions abroad. Therefore, this attack has no legal basis under US municipal laws.

About USA's right under international law, the UN Charter authorised the member States to act in self-defence, but all use of force, under customary international law, must be an act of self-defence. All peaceful means must be exhausted before any force can be deployed. Here, US has attacked first and then putting out justifications.

Also, all actions for self-defence must be proportional. It is hard to understand the use of cluster missiles in attacking a bread and pharmaceutical factory in Sudan, as a proportional response.

The UN Charter also obliges members to refrain from threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of another State. The US attack breached this

cardinal principle of international law, when it violated sovereignty. Fifty or so missiles penetrated Pakistan's airspace violating Pakistan's sovereignty.

It perhaps has also violated Pakistan's sovereignty when missiles landed on its soil. But, because of real politics, after a phone call from Clinton, Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif retracted earlier claim and protest to US, about attacks on its territory. Pakistan wanted some profit out of this US adventure by lessening tight US sanctions in the wake of recent nuclear explosion, which already has gripped Pakistan.

Conclusion

With these attacks, US has set and began the journey on a slippery slope. The question now is, who is next, which country? If US adheres to the same principle, US missiles should also land in US soil, where there are many Osama bin Ladens, individuals and groups, who consider US government as enemy. Oklahoma bombing is an example.

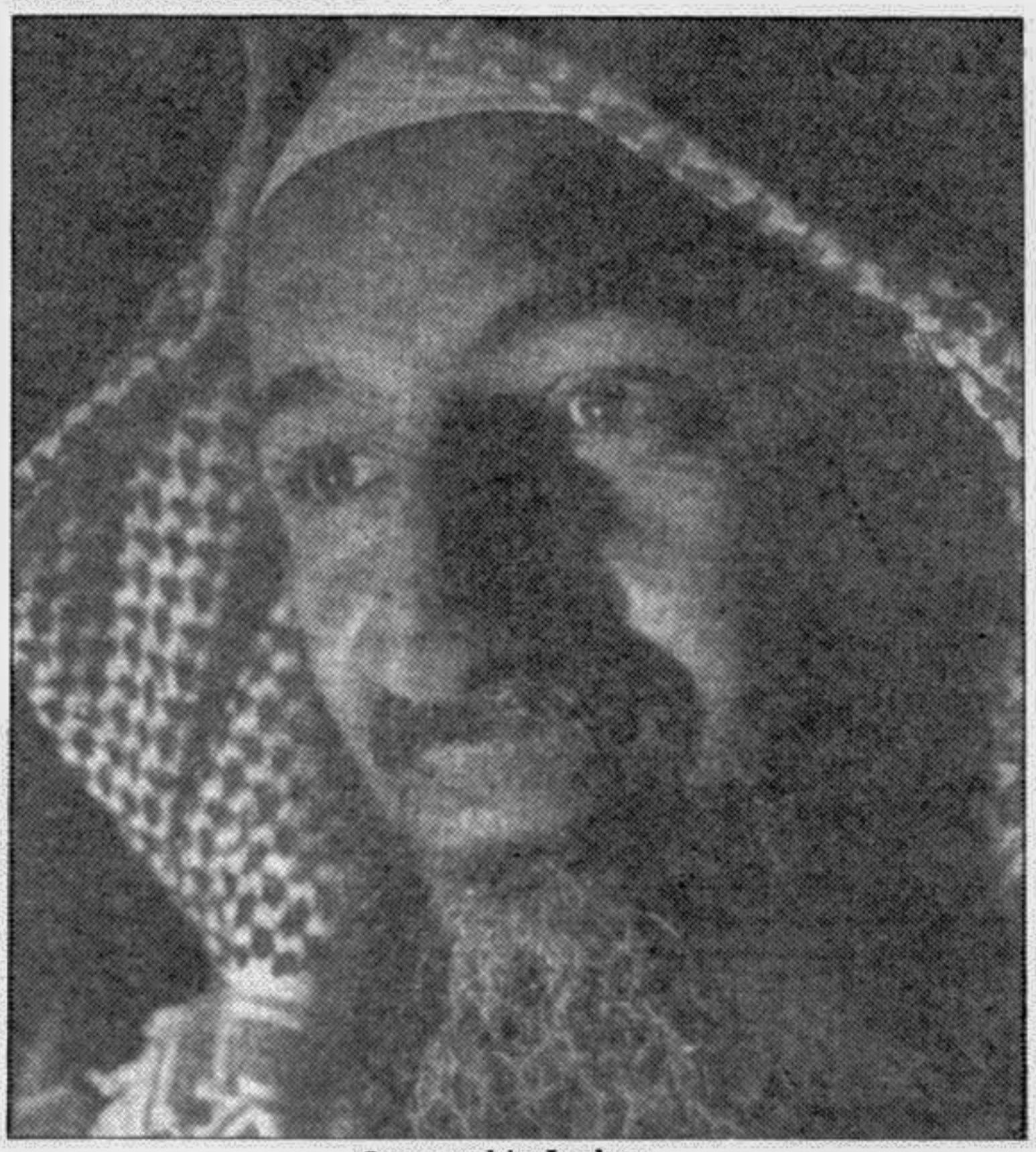
The next question is, where will this process end? How many more bases, factories, individuals must be eliminated to protect USA?

Like USA, other countries can also attack non-belligerent countries in pursuit of a terrorist or his/her network, and thus, no country is now safe following these US attacks.

Moreover, with this attack US has, this time around, really hurt feelings of the Muslims around the world. A great number of Muslims have been alienated. Moderate Muslims are being pushed to the edge, and more and more of them will now be sympathetic to the extremist cause. Many Muslims are taking it as an attack on Islam and on Muslims, regardless of what Clinton said. It is not a good policy to make over a billion people an enemy.

Finally, the USA has lost credibility too and is an unreliable power now. By using force first, USA can no longer be trusted.

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Ossama bin Laden

Osama bin Laden has his own reasons. He left comfortable life in Saudi Arabia to fight in Afghanistan, to join the Jihad, to liberate an Islamic

What Happened to the 50 Missing Missiles?

The United States cruise missile attacks on Afghanistan and Sudan add a dangerous dimension to the Cold War between Islamic fundamentalists and the West. The US action, reports Gemini News Service, may be influenced more by strategic considerations than by President Clinton's domestic difficulties.

by Daya Kishan Thussu

DESPITE its dubious legality and the threat of anti-Western retaliation, the US strikes against two of the world's poorest Islamic countries make perfect sense in strategic terms.

Not only do such actions exploit Western fears of a real or imagined Islamic enemy, they also give the Pentagon an opportunity to display its latest "smart" weapons.

The US attacks on Sudan and Afghanistan were in response to the bombing — allegedly by Islamic terror networks — of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, which killed 263 people, 12 of them from the United States, and injured more than 5,000.

However, even FBI Director Louis Beech was reported to have said that he had come to "no final conclusions" about who was responsible.

The US justified its actions, which violated international law and the UN Charter, as "self-defence" under Article 51, even though the state was hardly in imminent danger. As usual, a pliant media was ready to defend the indefensible.

The Washington Post editorial said Clinton "has taken the right step," while the New York Times approved the choice of targets, saying "the Pentagon's selection of targets looks reasonable."

However, there are strong grounds for doubting that the factory, which makes half of Sudan's medicines, was producing chemical weapons, as Washington claimed.

As usual, Britain voiced the loudest support for the US, with the Sunday Telegraph editorial saying it "wholeheartedly applauded President Clinton's intention," and the Sunday Times arguing that "had he done nothing, he would have betrayed his higher oath to defend America's interests and the wider cause of freedom."

With glaring irony, it was in the same cause that the US created and armed Islamic groups like the one led by the Osman bin Laden. In the 1980s, the CIA helped the Saudi fugitive organise resistance against the Soviet occupiers of Afghanistan.

In those Cold War days he and his band of fanatics were hailed by the Western media as "freedom fighters."

Now that he is demanding that the US withdraw its forces from Saudi Arabia — home to the holiest sites of Islam — he has been transformed into "enemy number one", with his pictures splashed across the world.

The power and wealth of bin Laden has been fantastically exaggerated, presenting him as a threat to "civilisation as we know it", as if his fortune, variously estimated at \$200-\$300 million could rank with the financial muscle of the world's remaining superpower (each Tomahawk missile alone costs about one million dollars).

The global Islamic network that bin Laden is supposed to control with this money "remembers nothing so much as," said the usually staid London Financial Times, "the sect of the Assassins which terrorised the Middle East for some 150 years in the 11th and 12th centuries."

Gemini Special

THE TOMAHAWK TERROR

The American strike into Afghanistan and Sudan has stirred worldwide controversy, adding to fears of a looming western showdown with Islam. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said the Islamic terrorism threat was 'the war of the future'.

Such archaic groupings, it was implied, should be destroyed. But the reasons behind this Islamic anti-Americanism have largely been ignored.

The US-dominated Western media has played a central role in demonising Islam — one of the world's great religions with one billion followers.

Large and influential sections of the media have contributed to a paranoia about the "clash of civilisations" between the ostensibly liberal and democratic West and the fanatical Islamic fundamentalists led by people like bin Laden.

In the post-Soviet, post-Cold War era such projections have replaced communism as the threat to the Western way of life.

One report in the generally measured London Observer even went to the extent of predicting a nuclear nightmare, saying the destabilisation that may ensue in the wake of United States attack could even endanger Pakistan's recently acquired "nuclear capability" which may "fall into the hands of Islamic fundamentalists who wish to wage total war against America."

This type of coverage helps to promote the divide between a rational 'us' and the irrational 'them' for the Western public.

A CNN poll taken immediately after the strikes were announced from 66 per cent of United States citizens favoured the attacks. A poll by Newsweek a couple of days later, showed that figure to have reached 73 per cent.

Although there has been much speculation about the timing of the attack — with most commentators linking it with "Monicagate" — Washington's action has to be viewed in a wider context.

Apart from reinforcing the Islamic threat, such actions also provide the US military establishment with the chance to show off their new and sophisticated weapons systems.

Such long-distance strikes, with no risk to US forces and no countries to ask for permission, offer the ideal opportunity for test-firing, as well as being an

dreds of miles without any need to rely on the terrain for orientation.

The missiles can fly up to 1,000 miles and carry 1,000 pounds of explosives. These are impressive credentials. And it is important that the Pentagon invests new enemies in distant lands to justify their development.

Britain is soon to acquire these latest Tomahawks — perhaps as a token of appreciation for its unquestioning support for Uncle Sam.

However, one key question seems to have been overlooked by most commentators. The US reportedly fired more than 70 cruise missiles. The Associated Press, reporting from Khartoum, quoted Sudanese government sources that the factory was hit by six missiles, while the seventh missed its target.

There were conflicting reports about how many missiles landed in Afghanistan — the estimates vary from 15 to 20. But that still leaves nearly 50 Tomahawks unaccounted for. What happened to them?

How many more people have to be killed or maimed by these "smart" weapons? Since US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has said the Islamic terrorism threat is "the war of the future," do we have to brace ourselves for more Tomahawk terror?

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Seesaw Battles for Control of Congo

The powers behind Kabila's success turned against him because he could not deliver the goods which he promised. This has triggered the repetition of the very process that unseated Mobutu.

by A S M Nurunnabi

IT has been said that 'the more things change in Congo, the more they remain the same.' It is an irony that Laurent Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo, within his fourteen-month rule is being opposed by exactly the same forces which he had used last year to get rid of the former late President Mobutu Sese Seko. The reason for this sudden change is said to be that President Kabila is perceived to be a 'disaster' for Congo by his former mentors who helped him into power. The tide has now turned against him.

Kabila was enthusiastically backing in his bid to lead a government with his promise of political stability through democracy and a revitalised economy. Neighbouring countries were assured rebel factions would no longer be allowed to use this third largest country in Africa as a base for guerrilla activities.

The powers behind Kabila's success turned against him because he could not deliver the goods which he promised. This has triggered the repetition of the very process that unseated Mobutu. On that occasion last year, Congolese rebels swept into Kinshasa with the military assistance of Congo's neighbours Rwanda, Uganda, Angola and Burundi.

This time, reports indicated that Rwanda was actively engaged in helping the rebels with the tacit support of Uganda. It also appeared that a group of smaller neighbouring countries in the east, Rwanda and Uganda had effectively set themselves up as "trustees" of Congo's future.

There were other reasons for

Battle for Central Africa

Troops of five neighbouring countries in central Africa are involved in civil war between Congo government of President Laurent Kabila and rebels trying to oust him. Fighting centres around area of capital, Kinshasa.

The map shows the Democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire) at the center, with Kinshasa as the capital. Neighboring countries are labeled: Cameroon, Gabon, Congo, Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, and Sudan. Key locations include Kinshasa, Kisangani, and Matadi. Arrows indicate military movements: 'Uganda and Rwanda support rebels', 'Angolan troops support Kabila', 'Zimbabwe sends troops, planes to support Kabila', and 'Angolan pincer move into DRC'. The Gulf of Guinea is also shown.

disappointment with Kabila's regime. Uganda is fighting with its rebels, known as Lord's Liberation Army in the north, Rwanda is being raided by militia of former Hutu rulers. President Kabila reportedly made little effort to cut the supply lines of the rebels from Congo. This failure angered both Uganda and Rwanda governments.

Secondly, President did not introduce the necessary economic reforms. The neighbouring countries wanted Congo to be an engine of economic growth that will have a spillover effect on them.

Thirdly, President Kabila sabotaged the UN investigation of the alleged massacres during his campaign against Mobutu. Finally, Kabila failed to bring about democracy in the country. He imprisoned his opposition leaders, leading to deep tribal factionalism and political instability.

In a pre-dawn shoot-out on August 3, rebel troops clashed with Congolese soldiers in two Kinshasa Army barracks. The same day, rebel commanders in the east declared war against the government and attacked bases near Goma, a provincial capital. In two days, the rebels — mainly members of Congo's ethnic minority backed by their ethnic cousins who rule Rwanda — captured every major town in eastern Congo. Next they hijacked a 737 in Goma, flew 200 kilometres west and took the military base at Kitna and the oil port of Moanda. Last week the airport at Matadi on the main supply route to Kinshasa fell. The rebels promised

Developing World's Impending Water Crisis will Impede Growth

Ashok Easwaran writes from Chicago

THE chronic water shortage that the developing world is facing due to its rapidly expanding population could seriously hinder growth, according to a study.

In many developing countries, lack of water could cap future improvements in the quality of life, says Don Hinrichsen, lead author of the study by the Johns Hopkins University and a consultant with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

"Populations are growing rapidly in these countries and at the same time, per capita use must increase — to grow food, for better personal health and hygiene and to supply growing cities and industries," he adds. "Meanwhile, there is no more fresh water on earth than there was 2000 years ago, when population was three per cent of its current size."

Hinrichsen notes that conflicts over water are brewing and could turn violent as shortages grow. "In Africa, Central Asia, the near East and South America, countries are already bickering over access to rivers and inland seas," he says.

"Even within a country, competition for use can be

ferce. The water on China's Yellow River, for example, is under so much demand that the river has dried up before reaching the ocean. In 1996, when there was enough water, the government ordered the farmers not to use it because a state-run oil field further downstream needed the water to operate," he adds.

In developing countries, the report by the university's School of Public Health notes, overuse and pollution are major problems. India, it says, will be one of the 48 countries where one in three persons will face shortage of water by the year 2025. "China, with a population of 1.5 billion, will not be far behind," it adds.

According to the parameters of the study, a country faces "water stress" when annual water supplies drop below 1,700 cubic metres per person. Water-scarce countries have annual water supplies of less than 1,000 cubic metres per person. Currently, it says, 31 countries face water stress or scarcity.

In 1996, it says, people worldwide used an estimated 54 per cent of all accessible fresh water. The next 30 years of population growth will raise

the number to 70 per cent and by much more if per capita water use continues to rise at its current pace.

Agriculture is the biggest polluter, even more than industries and municipalities, according to Hopkins researchers. "In every country where agricultural fertilisers and pesticides are used, they have contaminated groundwater and surface waters."

Referring to the adverse effects of polluted water, the report says "about 2.3 billion people in the world suffer from diseases that are linked to water such as dysentery, cholera, typhoid and schistosomiasis."

The researchers have called for a "blue revolution" to conserve and manage fresh water supplies.

— India Abroad News Service

that by the end of the month they would be in the capital.

Now, in just two weeks, Kabila's former allies have captured territory that took him four months to win. No wonder most observers believe his time is running out. "I doubt he'll last this month," a western diplomat said, "he's already history."

Support for Kabila waned both at home and abroad. Like his predecessor, Kabila has denied rights of full citizenship to Putshis even though they have lived in what is now Congo for 200 years. Other Congolese have their own complaints; opinion polls show that 70 per cent believe life was better under Mobutu. Though Kinshasa residents credit Kabila with stabilising the currency, they complain that he created an even more repressive regime than Mobutu's. Economically, Congolese are reportedly worse off than ever; they lack jobs and roads, schools and hospitals.

Kabila's foreign sponsors are disappointed in him too. Washington, a major patron of Rwanda and Uganda, had propped up Mobutu for decades. But in his waning days, the US State Department withdrew its support and looked consciously to Kabila as a champion of democracy. Now these hopes have fizzled.

With his support fading abroad, Kabila has taken desperate measures to win friends at home. He has released political opponents from detention. And he is seeking to capitalise on the deep Congolese resentment of Tutsis.

Last week, the US State Department admitted that there was 'credible evidence' of support of Rwandan interference in neighbouring country affairs and its embassy "because of a deteriorating security situation."

Meanwhile, the rebels were preparing for a final push for the capital. At a rally in Sake, 35 km west of Goma, rebel military leader Jean Pierre Ondeano was greeted by 500 men ready for the coming battle for Kinshasa. Meanwhile, South Africa urgently sought a diplomatic solution to the mounting crisis in Congo, as foreign troops flowed in to back beleaguered President Kabila. Regional stability hung in the balance as Zimbabwe President Mugabe sent combat troops to support Kabila. Uganda and Rwanda, supporting the rebels warned Angola and Zimbabwe assisting Kabila to keep out. Forces loyal to President Kabila and Rwanda-backed rebels lately appeared to be shaping up for a show-down in the strategic western corridor linking the capital Kinshasa with the South Atlantic.

South Africa and other member-states of the South African Development Community called for a ceasefire during a hastily called week and peace meeting in Pretoria. South African leaders at the emergency summit mandated South African President Nelson Mandela to implement their decision calling for an end to the Congo crisis.

Meanwhile Congo's Angolan allies have reportedly driven rebel forces from a string of Atlantic coast towns in a stunning reversal of rebel gains.

Buoyed up by recent successes, the Congo government was reported to have rejected a ceasefire proposal, insisting all Rwanda and Ugandan troops must first withdraw from Congolese territory.

Kabila's allies may have their own interests to safeguard.

Zimbabwe, having extended more than \$200 million in military credits to Congo has a financial stake in Kabila's government. Angola's involvement may be partially driven by a concern that Congo's rebels could link up with Angola's UNITA insurgent movement.

All this seems to set a dangerous trend in the volatile African continent for governments to interfere in the internal affairs of a sovereign state. In this nightmarish scenario, observers argue that Organisation of African Unity (OAU) may take more active interest in convening a summit to broker a negotiated settlement for peace and progress of Africa. The UN may also involve itself for the sake of peace, development, good governance and human rights.

Since the seesaw nature of the raging battles in Congo has imparted an international character to the conflict on account of the involvement of the outside power, it seems very likely that the ongoing turmoil may not admit of any short-term solution.