

SAACID



Disappointing Conclusion to Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration Programme

In partnership with UNDP-Somalia, SAACID-Australia and SAACID-Somalia conducted a Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) programme in Mogadishu from 1 December 2005 to 31 January 2007 for 512 freelance militiamen.

This programme encompassed the lessons learned from the previous programme. This programme covered all 16 districts of Mogadishu – the first such programme to include all districts and clans in a single programme. Thirty-two freelance militiamen were invited to join the programme from each district.

Each militiaman voluntarily joining the programme had to provide a fully functional light, medium or heavy machinegun as their commitment to the programme.

The programme concluded successfully on 31 January 2007, with 505 of the 512 men successfully completing all elements of that programme. This programme – along with previous DDR programmes that SAACID has implemented – highlight that communities from all clans are very willing to participate in disarmament activities, if communities are genuine stakeholders in the process. Top-down centralised DDR initiatives have a poor worldwide record, while tailored community-based initiatives that account for the local context yield far superior results. This programme sends a clear message to the international community on how DDR should be initiated in Somalia.

A final closing ceremony was due to be held after the formal completion of the programme, in which all the weapons would be publicly destroyed. Increasing insecurity in the city meant that this could not happen. SAACID received an increasing number of implicit and explicit threats from actors in Mogadishu that the weapons were to be handed over, or else there would be significant repercussions for SAACID. On 26 April, SAACID received a particularly strong threat, and decided that it was no longer tenable to safely hold the weapons, but instead concluded that the weapons needed to be destroyed.

All 512 light, medium and heavy machineguns were destroyed by SAACID staff in the following days. SAACID photographed and videoed each weapon being destroyed; and UNDP-Somalia has possession of 9 DVDs that show each weapon being destroyed. The weapon remnants were being kept until it was safe to take them to one of SAACID's schools, where SAACID was going to create a peace monument. UNDP-Somalia was fully aware of SAACID plans. The container that the weapon pieces were being held in clearly identified the weapons as being part of a UNDP, SAACID-Australia and SAACID-Somalia DDR programme (see www.saacid.org for more photos and information on the programme).

On 18 June, at around 5 am, Ethiopian and TFG police (Majeertan) closed down Abdul-aziz District. They only targeted MSF-Spain, SAACID's administrative compound, SAACID-Somalia's Country Director's personal house (Raha Janaqow) and the private house of SAACID-Somalia's

ex-Country Director (Khadija Osoble). In each place they took the AKs that were being used to provide compound security.

When they invaded the SAACID administrative compound they took 3 AKs that were used for compound security. At SAACID-Somalia's Country Director's house, they took 1 AK.

They trashed the compound, smashed doors, windows, computers and safes, and looted a lot of equipment. They also took the remnants of the 512 weapons that SAACID had destroyed as part of the UNDP DDR programme. According to the TFG spokesman, Abdi Haji Gobdon, the TFG and the Ethiopian military "found more than 500 AK-47s in the compound". This statement only highlights the ongoing duplicity and ignorance of the TFG.

On that day, 3 SAACID staff members were taken away and imprisoned in an unknown location. Other staff members were put under attest in the administrative compound. SAACID-Somalia's Country Director was put under house arrest in her house.

SAACID was also advised that it was an Al Qaeda organisation, and that any SAACID member was liable to be imprisoned or shot.

After trashing and looting the compound until 7 pm, the Ethiopians and Majeertan left.

At 6 am on the next day, Ethiopian military and police controlled by the Prime Minister returned. They further trashed the compound and detained 2 more SAACID staff (released later that day). Files from the compound were also taken or destroyed. They also arrested and imprisoned SAACID-Somalia's Country Director from her home. The charge was being a member of Al Qaeda.

The SAACID members that were at the compound were told that the Ethiopians were taking over the compound as a military base, and that any person returning to the compound would be shot.

On 21 June, after very heavy pressure from Mogadishu civil society and from the Somali Diaspora in Europe and the US; as well as interventions from INGOs, the Dutch, British, US and UN in Nairobi, SAACID-Somalia's Country Director and the other staff members were released. Everyone from SAACID wishes to sincerely thank all those Somali leaders who risked their lives to call for the unconditional release of SAACID staff members. SAACID would also like to sincerely thank those INGOs, governments and UN agencies that acted on behalf of SAACID.

On 22 June, SAACID-Somalia's Country Director and her husband were re-arrested. The charges were:

- 1) Being a member of the illegal Hawiye committee opposing the TFG
- 2) Being a member of the illegal Hawiye committee that was planning and implementing terrorist acts against the TFG
- 3) Being a civil society leader that was organising opposition to the TFG with the intent of dismantling the TFG

After being interrogated all day, they were released in the afternoon.

Since then, the Ethiopians have withdrawn from the compound; but have set up a tent in front of the compound and harass everyone entering and leaving the compound. TFG police regularly enter the compound and harass those in the compound.

Tony Burns
Director of Operations, SAACID-Australia



Weapon storage container clearly identifying the programme and partners



Destroyed weapons



TFG/Ethiopian destruction of property



Destroying weapons



Smashed equipment



Testing the functionality of weapons at the beginning of the programme



Ex-militiaman receiving training as an auxiliary nurse