

Ethiopian Adviser Denies New York Times Report



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A senior Ethiopian official yesterday denied a report in The New York Times detailing the close and largely clandestine collaboration between [Ethiopia](#) and the United States to kill or capture leaders of [Al Qaeda](#) in the Horn of Africa.

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"The New York Times has fabricated this story, and if there is any Pentagon official whom they are quoting, then that official does not have the slightest knowledge of the region or Ethiopia," Bereket Simon, a close adviser to Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, told Reuters. The Times report, published yesterday, chronicled how the American military had provided the Ethiopians with intelligence on the whereabouts of Islamic militants in [Somalia](#), and described how American AC-130 gunships had conducted strikes on Qaeda suspects using an airstrip in eastern Ethiopia.

The article was based on interviews with American officials, who agreed to discuss the collaboration because they saw it as relatively successful in disrupting terrorist networks in the region.

A Pentagon spokesman, Bryan Whitman, declined to comment on the details of American operations in Ethiopia, saying, "The very nature of some of our operations are not conducive to public disclosure."

He added, "We work very closely with our allies in the region in the conduct of our military operations."

Being seen as a close military partner of the United States is a delicate proposition for Ethiopia, since anti-American sentiment is high in parts of Somalia, and Ethiopia is already viewed as an invader by many Somalis.