

2024

UAE's Illegal Mining Activities in Puntland and False Jihadist Threat Reports



Background

This analysis addresses the ongoing issue of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) reportedly engaging in illegal mining activities in the Puntland region of Somalia. Furthermore, it rebuts the claims made in the recent report by the [Emirates Policy Center \(EPC\)](#), which alleges an expansion of the Islamic State (IS) in Puntland as a new round of jihadist infighting in Somalia. The report is seen as an attempt to divert attention from the UAE's exploitative practices and to scare the Western alliance with the exaggerated threat of jihadist penetration in Somalia and the broader African continent.

The Puntland region of Somalia is rich in natural resources, including gold and various other minerals. The UAE has been involved in the exploitation of these resources, often bypassing legal frameworks and engaging in activities that local authorities and international watchdogs have condemned as illegal. This exploitation undermines Somalia's sovereignty and deprives its people of their rightful share of natural resource wealth.





False Claims and Misinformation



- The report from the EPC, titled "Expansion of the Islamic State in Puntland: A New Round of Jihadist Infighting in Somalia," presents a narrative that overstates the presence and threat of jihadist groups in the region. This tactic appears to serve multiple purposes:

1. ***Diversion from Illegal Activities:*** By emphasizing the threat of jihadist expansion, the UAE aims to divert international attention from its own illegal mining activities in Puntland. This deflection reduces scrutiny and potential sanctions against their operations.

2. ***Manipulation of Western Perceptions:*** The report seeks to manipulate Western perceptions and policies by amplifying fears of terrorism. This fear-mongering strategy is designed to secure geopolitical and economic interests, leveraging the Western alliance's concern for regional stability and counterterrorism.

3. ***Undermining Local Governance:*** Highlighting jihadist threats undermines the credibility and authority of local governance structures in Puntland. This erosion of local power benefits foreign actors like the UAE, who can continue their activities with less resistance.

Overstated Threat of IS Expansion

1. ***Exaggeration of Numbers:*** The EPC report claims a significant expansion of IS fighters in Puntland without providing concrete evidence or verifiable numbers. Independent reports and local sources indicate that the actual presence of IS fighters is minimal and localized, not representing a widespread or growing threat.

2. ***Misrepresentation of Infighting:*** The report portrays jihadist infighting as a major destabilizing factor. However, local security forces and allied international partners have managed to contain such conflicts, minimizing their impact on the broader security landscape in Puntland.

3. **Lack of Contextual Analysis:** The report fails to consider the complex socio-political dynamics of Puntland, where local clans and political factions play a significant role in maintaining order and countering extremist threats. Ignoring these factors results in a skewed and alarmist portrayal of the situation.

Real Motives Behind the UAE's Actions

1. **Economic Exploitation:** The UAE's interest in Puntland is primarily economic. By engaging in illegal mining, they extract valuable resources without fair compensation or adherence to environmental and labor standards. This exploitation directly harms the local population and environment.

2. **Geopolitical Influence:** The UAE's activities in Puntland are part of a broader strategy to establish geopolitical influence in the Horn of Africa. By fostering relationships with local authorities and engaging in economic projects, they seek to secure strategic footholds in the region.


3. **Distraction Tactics:** The false narrative of jihadist threats serves as a distraction from these exploitative practices. By promoting the idea of a growing terrorist threat, the UAE hopes to justify its presence and operations under the guise of contributing to regional security.



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In 2022, Somalia exported \$246M in Gold, making it the 77th largest exporter of Gold in the world. At the same year, Gold was the 1st most exported product in Somalia. The main destination of Gold exports from Somalia are: United Arab Emirates

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The EPC report on the expansion of the Islamic State in Puntland appears to be a deliberate attempt to mislead the international community and divert attention from the UAE’s illegal mining activities in the region. The exaggerated claims of jihadist threats serve to manipulate Western perceptions and policies, allowing the UAE to continue its exploitation with reduced scrutiny.

A more balanced and accurate assessment of the situation in Puntland is essential. It is crucial to recognize the real motivations behind the UAE’s actions and address the root causes of instability in the region, including illegal resource extraction and external interference. The international community should support Somalia’s sovereignty and efforts to establish legal and sustainable management of its natural resources, ensuring that the benefits are shared equitably with its people.

FACTS

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The United Arab Emirates has imported unrefined gold worth billions of dollars from African states since 2006, as rising gold prices after the 2008 financial crisis encouraged informal mining. The UAE is the biggest destination for African gold.

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