From:	Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
Sent:	Wednesday, February 22, 2012 11:12 AM
To:	H
Subject:	FW: Ethiopian, Somali troops capture key Somali town (AP)

FYI

From: Walsh, Matthew P
Sent: Wednesday, February 22, 2012 10:18 AM
To: Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: FW: Ethiopian, Somali troops capture key Somali town (AP)

FYSA, if true, this is a big tactical military victory for the TFG and Ethiopia. The "Somalia soldiers" fighting with the Ethiopians are Somali militias trained by Ethiopia but aligned with the TFG, and the TFG supports this operation. Baidoa is the most important city, politically and economically, in southern Somalia (it's where the TFG was based until AMISOM secured Mogadishu in 2009) besides the port of Kismayo, so this would be a big military gain. Would mean the only big city AS still controls in Somalia is Kismayo, plus some other medium-sized ones.

From: OpsNewsTicker
Sent: Wednesday, February 22, 2012 10:07 AM
To: NEWS-AF
Cc: SES-O_Shift-II
Subject: Ethiopian, Somali troops capture key Somali town (AP)

MOGADISHU (AP) - Residents say Ethiopian troops and Somali soldiers have seized a key town in south central Somalia.

Baidoa resident Isaq Haji says tanks and infantry troops swept into the town on Wednesday after a gunfight. He said al-Shabab fighters retreated into jungle areas outside the town, about 160 miles (256 kilometers) northwest of Mogadishu.

Haji said the fighting had stopped, but gunfire could still be heard.

In a website statement, al-Shabab confirmed the seizure of the town, saying their fighters conducted a tactical retreat. Baidoa is a major base for al-Shabab.

Resident Tifow Abdi says he joined hundreds of others who fled the fighting.

Ethiopian and pro-government troops seized two villages earlier this week in a push aimed at capturing Baidoa.

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