Somalia: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

In early September 2020, al-Shabaab carried out a series of deadly attacks throughout Somalia. According to security analysts at the National Intelligence and Security Agency, al-Shabaab has taken advantage of a deteriorating Somali government and has regrouped to carry out significant attacks on a more regular basis. Within the week of September 14 to September 18, al-Shabaab carried out more than a dozen attacks in Somalia despite ongoing airstrikes by the U.S. military. The attacks coincide with the upcoming legislative elections on November 1, and the presidential election expected in early 2021. Additionally, on September 7, an explosives-laden truck exploded at a military outpost in the Jana Abdalle area of the Lower Juba region. The attack killed three Somali military officers and injured two others, one of whom died later due to his injuries. An American service member was also seriously wounded. The attack occurred days after Somali forces, with support from the United States military, reclaimed the area from al-Shabaab. Two days later, an al-Shabaab suicide bombing at a restaurant in the capital Mogadishu killed three people, including one child, and injured seven others. Days later on September 11, an al-Shabaab suicide bomber killed at least six worshippers and injured 20 others at a mosque in the southern port city of Kismayo. (Sources: _New York Times_ [1], Associated Press [2], Al Jazeera [3], Deutsche Welle [4])

Last year, on November 5, 2019, al-Shabaab released a video of emir Ahmed Ubar Abu Ubaida [5] where he named the United States as the group's primary target and demanded supporters attack Americans wherever they could. American and Western intelligence analysts believe that al-Shabaab poses an increased threat to U.S. personnel and equipment in the region, the Pentagon's largest permanent base in Africa in Djibouti, as well as critical international maritime trade routes such as the Bab el-Mandeb waterway. Prompted by these concerns, coupled with rising al-Shabaab attacks in neighboring countries like Kenya, where a January 2020 attack left three Americans dead, the U.S. military established a Special Operations task force of 100 troops and analysts to bolster security in Somalia and counter al-Shabaab. The United States has also steadily increased its air campaign against the terrorist group. From January 1 to March 1, 2020, U.S. airstrikes in Somalia were nearly the same amount of strikes against ISIS in Iraq and Syria in the same time period, according to a U.S. defense official. In a report released on July 28, 2020, the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) acknowledged it had carried out 43 airstrikes in Somalia in the first seven months of 2020, compared to 42 strikes from 2007 to 2017. (Sources: Voice of America [6], _New York Times_ [7], Voice of America [8], _Time_ [9])

Overview

Following the overthrow of Somalia's central government in 1991, the country fell into a state of protracted civil war, which allowed warlords, Islamist fundamentalist groups, clan-based militias, and other armed factions to assume control throughout Somalia. Between 1991 and 2010, Somalia saw 14 separate governments, while rival warlords and militant groups continuously fought to gain territory and establish authority. (Sources: Council on Foreign Relations [10], Council on Foreign Relations [11], BBC News [12], International Peacebuilding Alliance [13])

Some rule of law has been restored to Somalia in the past decade. In January 2007, the U.N. Security Council established the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), a peacekeeping mission operated by the African Union with U.N. support. Consisting of more than 20,000 soldiers from Somalia's neighboring countries, AMISOM was mandated to "conduct Peace Support Operations in Somalia to stabilize the situation in the country." In 2012, Somalia held its first presidential election in 45 years, resulting in the creation of the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS). AMISOM and the FGS have had some success in ousting al-Shabaab from the country's major cities, and the FGS now maintains control of the capital, Mogadishu. However, al-Shabaab is still able to maintain an operational capability in Mogadishu and seek refuge in rural areas and along the Kenya-Ethiopia border. In addition to al-Shabaab, other clan militias and Islamic militant groups continue to dominate in large areas in the rest of the country. These groups continue to clash with each other as well as with government forces. (Sources: U.S. Department of State [14], Center for Strategic and International Studies [15], BBC News [16], AMISOM [17], AMISOM [18])

In July 2016, the U.N. Security Council authorized further "offensive operations" by AMISOM to "reduce the threat posed by al-Shabab and other armed opposition groups" while aiming to gradually hand over security responsibilities to the Somali security forces. The United States also supplements FGS and AMISOM efforts against al-Shabaab and ISIS, recently increasing airstrikes. The U.S Africa Command (AFRICOM) acknowledged it carried out 43 airstrikes in Somalia between January and July 2020, compared to 42 strikes from 2007 to 2017. Between January 2019 and May 2019, U.S. Africa Command carried out 37 airstrikes that mostly targeted al-Shabaab, though some operations focused on ISIS. In 2018, the

U.S. carried out a total of 47 airstrikes against terrorist targets in support of the Somali government. It is reported that one of these airstrikes in Kunyo Barrow on July 18, 2019, killed Mohamed Nur Ikhlaas, head of al-Shabaab's domestic intelligence. By the end of 2020, AMISOM is expected to withdraw all of its 20,000 soldiers from Somalia and have turned security responsibility over to Somali government forces. (Sources: United Nations [19], United States Africa Command [20], CNN [21], Associated Press [22], VOA [23], *Time [9]*)

Public opinion is difficult to gauge in Somalia given the lack of public polling information available. Nevertheless, some basic trends can be discerned about how Somalis view the rise in Islamic extremism. A May 2013 survey of citizens in Kismayo, an al-Shabaab stronghold until 2011, found many respondents appreciated the law and order al-Shabaab had brought to the city but also felt trapped in the city, with one citizen describing it as an "open air prison." (Source: ORB International [24])

Radicalization and Foreign Fighters

Many years of violence and failed governments have created a power vacuum in Somalia that has allowed Islamic militant groups to establish control and exert influence over the population. After the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) came into power on June 5, 2006, a group of young hardliners split from a Salafi extremist group called al-Itihad al-Islami (AIAI) to join the ICU as its militia. The ICU took control of central and southern Somalia, including Mogadishu, reportedly prompting many people to flee the capital. The ICU imposed a strict version of sharia, shutting down movie theaters, centers for viewing soccer matches, and co-ed events such as sports. Sharia was violently enforced by the ICU militia, which later evolved into al-Shabaab. (Sources: United Nations [25], Council on Foreign Relations [10], Counter Extremism Project [26], Bureau of Investigative Journalism [27], BBC News [12], U.S. State Department [14])

The Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) has succeeded in eliminating al-Shabaab from most of the country's urban areas. However, the terrorist group continues to thrive in the rural towns and villages. The FGS continues to suffer setbacks as al-Shabaab exploits the overstretched Somali forces. Western governments, absorbed in the fight against ISIS, have reduced financial and military support to AMISOM, which plans to wind down operations by the end of 2020. (Source: Daily Beast [28])

Al-Shabaab

Al-Shabaab [29], or "the Youth," is a U.S.-designated terrorist organization affiliated with al-Qaeda [30]. It aims to establish a fundamentalist Islamic state in Somalia, which it hopes will ultimately expand to encompass the whole Horn of Africa. Analysts cite the militant Salafi extremist group al-Itihad al-Islami (AIAI, also known as Unity of Islam) as the precursor to al-Shabaab and the incubator for many of its leaders. AIAI targeted the Siad Barre military regime in the 1990s during the Somali Civil War. After the Barre regime fell, a younger, more hardline group split from AIAI, seeking to establish a "Greater Somalia" ruled under sharia. This group of youths—in Arabic, "al-Shabaab"—joined forces with the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) in an attempt to enforce sharia throughout Mogadishu. (Sources: National Counter Terrorism Center [31], Council on Foreign Relations [32])

In December 2006, U.S.-backed Ethiopian forces invaded Somalia and drove the ICU out of the capital. Though the majority of the ICU fled to neighboring countries, al-Shabaab retreated southward and began organizing attacks against the Ethiopian forces. In this way, al-Shabaab transitioned from a rebel group into a guerrilla movement and began seizing territory in central and southern Somalia. Al-Shabaab grew from a few hundred fighters in the 2006 to thousands by 2008, as Islamist-nationalist fighters sought to drive out the Ethiopian occupation. Since the end of the Ethiopian occupation in 2008, al-Shabaab has continued its efforts to establish sharia domestically and attack government representatives and AMISOM forces, while also adapting its foreign targets from Ethiopia to Kenya. Al-Shabaab views the AMISOM, as well as the FGS, as its primary enemies, since they are purportedly influenced by Western countries. (Sources: CNN [33], Council on Foreign Relations [32], BBC News [16])

In areas that it controls, al-Shabaab imposes its strict version of sharia, prohibiting activities like listening to music or shaving beards. The group has also worked extensively with al-Qaeda. Ahmed Abdi Godane [34], a founder and emir (commander) of al-Shabaab who was killed by a U.S. drone strike in September 2014, pledged his allegiance to al-Qaeda in 2012. However, since its inception, al-Shabaab has been rife with internal conflict. Key leaders have fought over violent

strategies and the group's overall direction, including its allegiance to al-Qaeda. While he wielded power, Godane worked to cleanse the group's ranks of internal opposition and further radicalize the group's members. After Godane's death, al-Shabaab debated switching allegiance to ISIS. However, after a small pro-ISIS faction broke away, the group reiterated its dedication to the violent al-Qaeda core. (Sources: Huffington Post [35], BBC News [16])

Al-Shabaab has executed a score of violent attacks, including the September 2013 Westgate Mall attacks in Nairobi, Kenya, which killed 68 people and wounded 175 more. The attack was the group's first major operation on foreign soil. On April 2, 2015, five al-Shabaab fighters stormed Garrisa University in Garrisa, Kenya, killing nearly 150 people. The militants reportedly targeted Christians and non-Muslims. On October 14, 2017, al-Shabaab militants detonated two truck bombs in the center of Mogadishu, killing over 500 people in the group's deadliest attack yet and Somalia's deadliest attack. (Source: BBC News [36], *New York Times* [37], *Guardian* [38], CNN [39], Voice of America [40])

Inside Somalia, al-Shabaab exploits resentment of government ineptitude, corruption, and a lack of economic opportunity to recruit new members. Outside Somalia, the group has also become adept at activating the Somali-American diaspora. As of February 2016, at least 40 Americans had joined al-Shabaab, many from Minnesota's large Somali-American community. A March 2017 report by terrorism researchers at Pennsylvania State University found that most Somali-American al-Shabaab recruits were "persuaded to join on the basis of nationalism but also were exposed to a radical interpretation of Islam." Many joined due to "pre-existing relationships with persons already involved in global jihad or as a group with friends or relatives." Prospective recruits were identified in face-to-face meetings as possibly susceptible to radical ideology, encouraged to travel abroad to join al-Shabaab in Africa and, finally, provided financial and other resources to enable them to do so. (Sources: *New York Times* [41], Counter Extremism Project [29], Inter-University Center for Terrorism Studies [42], Fox News [43])

On September 8, 2017, the U.S. Department of Justice announced that a 32-year-old American, Maalik Alim Jones, had pleaded guilty to conspiring to provide military support to al-Shabaab. He was found to have received military training from the group. American Jehad Serwan Mostafa, also known as Anwar al-Amriki, is an al-Shabaab commander believed to be responsible for training foreign recruits. He has been on the FBI's "Most Wanted" list since 2009. Another American, Somali Minnesota native Mohamed "Miski" Hassan, helped arrange one-way travel for Somali-Americans to join al-Shabaab. However, in December 2015, Hassan and a second recruit from Maryland reportedly defected from al-Shabaab and surrendered to Somali authorities. A Minnesota Somali community leader attributed such defections to al-Shabaab's inability to govern and the atmosphere of violence and destruction that recruits encounter in Somalia. In January 2016, a new recruitment video surfaced in which American-born al-Shabaab members call on African-Americans to convert to Islam and move to a Muslim country to "flee racial profiling and police brutality." (Sources: U.S. Department of Justice [44], Minnesota Public Radio [45], Fox News [43], FBI [46], *Star Tribune* [47])

A May 2019 report to the U.N. Security Council noted that al-Shabaab had increased mortar attacks, which signaled an increased capability to "hit strategic targets with precision and accuracy." Furthermore, as the Somali military, AMISOM, and U.S. Africa Command increased airstrikes targeting al-Shabaab members, the terror group moved more of its activities into urban centers like Mogadishu. The strategic shift has made it more difficult for the U.S. and Somali governments to target al-Shabaab members in cities, given their close proximity to civilians. (Sources: United Nations [48], Associated Press [49])

Al-Itihad al-Islami

Al-Itihad al-Islami (AIAI), or Unity of Islam, is an Islamic fundamentalist group that seeks to overthrow the Somali government. The group emerged between 1982 and 1984 as a fundraising entity for al-Qaeda before evolving into a terrorist organization. Osama bin Laden also reportedly committed funds to AIAI with the hopes of establishing an al-Qaeda presence in Somalia. The U.S. designated AIAI a foreign terrorist organization following the 9/11 attacks. (Sources: Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium [50], BBC News [51], U.S. Department of State [52])

According to the U.S. Department of State's annual *Patterns of Global Terrorism* report, AIAI is believed to have led attacks against Ethiopian forces and other Somali factions. The terror group is also alleged to have been responsible for bomb attacks in Ethiopia's capital city, Addis Ababa, in 1996 and 1997, and kidnapping aid workers in Somalia in 1998. AIAI reportedly supported al-Qaeda's bombing of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998 and the simultaneous attacks against a civilian airliner in Mombasa, Kenya in 2002. (Sources: Terrorism Research and Analysis

Consortium [50], BBC News [51], U.S. Department of State [53], CNN [54])

AIAI has weakened as a result of fighting rival Somali militias and enduring repeated attacks from Ethiopian forces. A young, more radical faction within AIAI split to form al-Shabaab. AIAI still reportedly holds small pockets of territory in southern Somalia and has a limited presence in Ethiopia and Kenya. (Sources: Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium [50], BBC News [51], U.S. Department of State [52])

ISIS in the Horn of Africa

On April 14, 2016, ISIS released a video announcing the creation of its "Commander Sheikh Abu Numan training camp," in the Al Bari Mountains in the Puntland State of Somalia. The video featured former al-Shabaab leader Abdiqadir Mumin, who declared the new ISIS training facility as the "first camp of the Caliphate in Somalia." He was one of several high profile al-Shabaab members to pledge his allegiance to ISIS and flee to Puntland. However, ISIS has reportedly struggled to gain territory and members in the Horn of Africa. In May 2016, the former director of the U.S.-based Puntland Intelligence Agency said the number of members estimated to be loyal to ISIS in Somalia ranges between 100 and 150. Al-Shabaab has been successful at retaining its members despite many Somali-speaking propaganda videos urging them to join ISIS instead. The Amniyat, an intelligence and secret service entity within al-Shabaab, is responsible for identifying threats and ensuring loyalty, including tracking down those who defect to ISIS. (Sources: Long War Journal [55], *Daily Mail* [56], Voice of America [57])

In May 2016, a former official of the U.S.-backed Puntland Intelligence Agency (PIA) reported that ISIS in Somalia receives military supplies, financial support, and military trainers from its affiliate in Yemen. The PIA claimed that funding to ISIS in Somalia had increased. "Evidence of financial support can be seen in the area; ISIS is buying supplies, vehicles, livestock, and they invested in the community by delivering water supplies to nearby communities affected by drought," said former PIA Director Abdi Hassan Hussein. Additionally, it is reported that support for ISIS attacks has been sponsored by Gulf actors in an effort to drive out Gulf rivals seeking to not only manage Somalia's ports and natural resources but also extend power across the Horn of Africa. (Sources: Voice of America [57], *New York Times* [58])

On April 8, 2016, the jihadist group Jahba East Africa, also known as the East African Front, announced in a public statement its formation and pledged allegiance to ISIS. Following its formation, the group recognized Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as the "rightful Khalifa (leader) of all Muslims." The group consists of former al-Shabaab fighters and, according to an analysis by the Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point, citizens hailing from Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. Since its establishment, Jahba East Africa has "sought to carve out its own role in Somalia's Islamist insurgency," according to a Cape Town-based Africa analyst. Jahba East Africa's founding statement publicly insulted al-Shabaab, calling the group a "psychological and physical prison." The group has also called for al-Shabaab members to defect and join Jahba East Africa. According to an analysis published by the Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point, Jahba East Africa "has proven to be more of an ideological threat than a physical one," having claimed credit for few acts of violence. (Sources: *Independent* [59], Center for Security Policy [60], *New York Times* [61], Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium [62], Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point [62], Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point [63], Daily Maverick [64])

Hizbul Islam

On February 4, 2009, four Somali Islamist groups—the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS), the Ras Kamboni Brigade, Jabhatul Islamiya, and Anole—merged to form Hizbul Islam. The group formed following the establishment of a peace agreement between Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and Islamist militants who sought negotiations. Militants that disapproved of negotiations with the TFG broke off to form Hizbul Islam, led by Sheikh Omar Iman Abubakar and Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys. Iman Abubakar vowed to cease the group's violent activities if the TFG implemented sharia as the Somali rule of law and if all foreign forces withdrew from the country. Hizbul Islam's ideology consists of a combination of radical Islam and Somali nationalism. (Sources: Stanford University [65], Critical Threats [66], Reuters [67], CriticalThreats.org [68])

By July 2009, Hizbul Islam and al-Shabaab controlled all of southern Somalia and most of Mogadishu. In 2010, however, the two groups began to drift apart due to ideological and territorial disputes. As the same time, divisions began to emerge

within Hizbul Islam, with small factions splintering off to form independent militias or join al-Shabaab. Hizbul Islam gradually lost influence, and by 2013, officially renounced militant activity and expressed interest in reconciling with the TFG. In June 2014, a Hizbul Islam spokesman Mohamed Moalim announced the group would change its name to "Istiqlaal" and operate as political party within the country's political system. (Sources: [Stanford University](#) [65], [Long War Journal](#) [69], [AllAfrica.com](#) [70])

Ras Kamboni Movement

Led by Ahmed Mohamed Islam (a.k.a. "Madobe"), the Ras Kamboni Movement (RKM) is a splinter group from the Ras Kamboni Brigade (RKB), a faction of Hizbul Islam. In February 2010, RKB split from Hizbul Islam to form two groups. One unit joined al-Shabaab and the other established RKM. RKM has two main goals: to eliminate al-Shabaab from southern Somalia and to control the port city of Kismayo. It has held part of Kismayo since 2012 and ultimately seeks to create a semi-autonomous state in the southeastern region. (Sources: [Stanford University](#) [71], [Jamestown Foundation](#) [72])

In September 2012, Kenyan troops, aided by Somali National Army allies and RKM fighters, expelled al-Shabaab from Kismayo, a strategic port that provides access into Jubaland. However, subsequent control of Kismayo remained divided, as the forces that ousted al-Shabaab jostled for control of the city and its seaport revenue. According to media reports, Kenyan troops provided security in Kismayo as part of their AMISOM deployment and shared port revenue with RKM leader Madobe. The Kismayo port is one of Somalia's leading passageways for charcoal trade, which generates tens of millions of dollars annually and is RKM's primary source of income. The Somali government has accused the Kenyan forces of supporting Madobe, a charge that Kenya's military has not denied. Kenyan military spokesman Colonel Cyrus Oguna said that the Kenyan military relationship with Madobe was "one inspired by necessity" against the common enemy of al-Shabaab. (Sources: [The Guardian](#) [73], [Stanford University](#) [71], [Jamestown Foundation](#) [72], [Voice of America](#) [74])

Since 2011, RKM has primarily attacked other southern Somali militant groups over territorial disputes. It has also committed violence within Kismayo in order to maintain control. For example, in November 2012, RKM forces conducted a series of shootings throughout the city while searching for an attacker who threw a grenade at Madobe's home. Around November 2, 2012, RKM detained hundreds of Kismayo residents while seeking out al-Shabaab militants. An RKM spokesman defended the roundup: "There are some [detainees] who have connections to al-Shabaab, but how can we know unless we make some arrests and conduct investigations; that's when we can know who is the Shabaab member and who is not." RKM also claimed responsibility for a September 2011 kidnapping of a British couple vacationing at the Kenyan island of Kiwayu near the Somali border. RKM fighters killed the husband and held his wife hostage for six months until her son paid her ransom in March 2012. (Sources: [Stanford University](#) [71], [Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Monitor](#) [72])

In August 2013, then-Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) Prime Minister Abdi Farah Shirdon and Madobe reportedly met in Kismayo to negotiate a power-sharing agreement within the Jubaland region, where Kismayo is located. The parties agreed to create a Jubaland interim government. Madobe reportedly granted the FGS nominal control of Kismayo, although the RKM continued to maintain its hold on the city. In November 2013, Jubaland militia leaders and FGS representatives met in Mogadishu for the Jubaland Convention and agreed to recognize Madobe as the region's president. In 2015, Madode was re-elected president of Jubaland and expressed his desire to keep peace between the FGS and the southern Somali clans. (Sources: [Stanford University](#) [71], [Somali Newsroom](#) [75], [Christian Science Monitor](#) [76], [Institute for Security Studies](#) [77] [International Crisis Group](#) [78])

Major Extremist and Terrorist Incidents

Mogadishu October 2017 Hotel Bombing and Siege

On October 28, 2017, al-Shabaab detonated a suicide car bomb at the entrance gate of Mogadishu's Nasa-Hablod hotel, near the Villa Somalia presidential palace. Shortly after, a second car bomb exploded nearby. Gunmen then stormed the hotel and held it under siege for fifteen hours. At least 27 people were killed in the attack. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility, stating that they targeted the hotel because it is often frequented by politicians and security officials. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [79], [CNN](#) [80], [Al Jazeera](#) [81], *[Guardian](#)* [82])

Mogadishu Center October 2017 Attack

On October 14, 2017, suspected al-Shabaab militants detonated a truck bomb in a busy area of the city center of Mogadishu. Shortly after the first blast, a second truck bomb detonated nearby. The attacks killed at least 500 people and wounded at least 300 others. Casualties were especially high because one of the bombs detonated next to a parked fuel tanker, creating a large fireball. Authorities blamed the attack on al-Shabaab, although the group did not claim responsibility. "Widespread civilian casualties are bad PR," said Jason Warner, a Somalia expert and professor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Unidentified officials speculated that the intended target may have been the nearby foreign ministry, where only a few offices would likely have been occupied on a weekend. The attack was the group's deadliest to date. (Sources: CNN [39], *New York Times* [37], *Guardian* [38], *Wall Street Journal* [83], NPR [84])

In the wake of the attack, the Somali government established the Zobe Rescue Committee and tasked it with investigating the attack's aftermath. The committee comprised of volunteers, government, and security officials, and released a final report on the attack on March 4, 2018. The final death toll stands at 587, though authorities warned that due to the intensity of the explosion, some remains of the victims could not be found. The report noted that an additional 316 people were seriously injured. The attack is the deadliest in Somalia's history and considered the third-deadliest terrorist explosion globally. (Sources: NPR [84], Hiiraan [85], Voice of America [40])

Mogadishu Restaurant June 2017 Attack

On June 15, 2017, at least 31 people were killed when al-Shabaab militants attacked two popular restaurants in Mogadishu. The militants detonated a car bomb outside the restaurants, then stormed the restaurants with gunfire. Survivors reported that gunmen moved from room to room looking for people to shoot and killing people on sight. The restaurants remained under siege overnight, for almost 11 hours. Senior Somali police Captain Mohamed Hussein said that the police response to the attack was slowed by darkness, with police waiting until morning to attempt to secure the building where the restaurants were located. Al-Shabaab said it targeted the restaurants because "women there sell their bodies for money." The attack followed the release of an audio message by an al-Shabaab leader urging the group's militants to escalate attacks "this Ramadan." (Sources: Voice of America [86], Fox News [87])

Mogadishu Port December 2016 Attack

On December 11, 2016, a suicide truck bomber drove into Somalia's largest port in Mogadishu and detonated his explosives, killing 29 people and wounding 48 more. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack, saying that it sought to disrupt the country's parliamentary elections scheduled for the end of that month. Al-Shabaab's military operations spokesman Sheikh Abdiasis Abu Musab claimed the targets of the attack were police officers stationed at the port "because [the officers] had been trained to provide security at [the] so-called elections." Previously, al-Shabaab has accused presidential and parliamentary candidates in Somalia of being puppets of Western powers. (Sources: *Telegraph* [88], Global Terrorism Database [89], CNN [90], Reuters [91], *Guardian* [92])

Airport February and March 2016 Attacks

On February 2, 2016, a passenger detonated a laptop bomb aboard Daallo Airlines Flight 159 traveling from Mogadishu to Djibouti. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack. Investigators believe that the passenger, Abdullahi Abdisalam Borleh, smuggled the bomb past airport security in order to target Western intelligence officials and Turkish NATO forces believed to be aboard the plane. The bomb, which killed only Borleh, was detonated soon after takeoff. Investigators said the bomber knew where to sit and how to place the device to maximize damage, but that the bomb detonated prematurely. Had the plane reached its higher cruising altitude, the blast would have caused a much larger secondary explosion in the fuel tank and destroyed the plane. Instead, the plane was able to return safely to Mogadishu, although the blast left a hole in its fuselage. The bombing demonstrated al-Shabaab's ability to construct sophisticated attacks and its willingness to target Western interests. (Sources: CNN [93], Combatting Terrorism Center [94])

On March 7, 2016, a suspected al-Shabaab laptop bomb exploded in Somalia's Beledweyne airport, killing one soldier and wounding six other people. The explosion occurred at a screening area where cargo and baggage are checked prior to being loaded onto planes. According to authorities, two other devices were defused as well. "A laptop computer went off at

the screening area, and the security forces have also managed to defuse two other explosive devices, one of them planted in a printer," Police Lieutenant-Colonel Ali Dhuh Abdi told reporters. (Sources: CNN [93], CNN [95], Combatting Terrorism Center [94], Quartz [96], BBC News [97], Al Jazeera [98])

First ISIS Attack in Somalia: April 2016

ISIS claimed responsibility for its first ever terrorist attack in Somalia on April 25, 2016. ISIS militants reportedly detonated an improvised explosive device targeting AMISOM forces in the Taridish area, located on the outskirts of Mogadishu. No one was killed in the attack, but ISIS supporters still circulated the group's official statement and claim of responsibility on Twitter and Telegram. A statement in ISIS's official online magazine *Dabiq* said "soldiers of the Caliphate" attacked an AMISOM vehicle. This was the first time ISIS officially claimed to be behind an attack in Somalia. Although the attack was unsuccessful, an ISIS-affiliated Twitter account promised "many operations" to come. (Sources: *Voactiv* [99], *Daily Mail* [100], International Business Times [101], *Dabiq* [102])

Lido Beach January 2016 & August 2016 Attacks

On January 22, 2016, al-Shabaab militants set off two cars bombs and engaged in a gun battle with local police outside a Lido beach restaurant in Mogadishu. The militants entered the restaurant from the beach, took hostages, and then killed them as police struggled to gain access to the restaurant, which they eventually did by breaking through a wall. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack, in which 20 people were killed. Afterward, unidentified analysts told the *New York Times* that al-Shabaab was "rebuilding" itself with weapons looted from recent attacks on AMISOM forces. al-Shabaab carried out a second attack at Lido beach on August 25, 2016, when two al-Shabaab members set off a car bomb and opened fire at the Banadir restaurant. Six civilians, two police officers, and two attackers were killed in that attack. (Sources: *Telegraph* [103], Reuters [104], *New York Times* [105], International Business Times [106], GOV.UK [107], Reuters [108])

Maka al-Mukarama Hotel 2015 Attack

On the evening of March 27, 2015, six gunmen detonated a car bomb outside Mogadishu's Maka al-Mukarama Hotel, popular among government officials and foreigners. The militants stormed the building and engaged in a 17-hour gun battle with Somali Special Forces. The Somali soldiers managed to kill the terrorists, one of whom detonated a suicide belt, but 20 individuals, including a U.N. diplomat, were killed in the attack. The following day, al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack, which news reports said was planned by senior al-Shabaab intelligence official Hassan Ali Dhoore. Subsequently, Dhoore was reportedly killed in a U.S. airstrike on March 31, 2016. (Sources: CNN [109], CBC News [110], *Guardian* [111], *Independent* [112])

Al-Shabaab Attacks on AMISOM and Foreign Forces

Al-Shabaab has repeatedly mounted successful attacks against AMISOM forces deployed in Somalia. On July 26, 2016, two suicide bombers detonated car bombs near AMISOM's headquarters at the Mogadishu airport, killing 13 people. On April 21, 2016, Al-Shabaab militants attacked an AMISOM convoy with an IED in Awdinle town of the Baay region, killing six Ethiopian soldiers. On January 15, 2016, al-Shabaab militants attacked an AMISOM military base in the southern Somali town of el-Adde, killing 63 Kenyan soldiers. The attack was confirmed by AMISOM on Twitter. On September 1, 2015, Al-Shabaab militants attacked the AMISOM Janale military base in southern Somalia, killing 70 soldiers. According to witnesses, the attack began with a suicide bombing at the base's gate, followed by sustained gunfire that lasted more than one hour. A Somali army officer claimed that the militants bombed a nearby bridge before the attack in order to prevent AMISOM soldiers from escaping. (Sources: BBC News [113], *Shabelle News* [114], Gov.uk [107], *Newsweek* [115], BBC News [115])

On December 25, 2014, al-Shabaab fighters attacked the headquarters of an AMISOM peacekeeping force at an airport outside Mogadishu. According to an AMISOM statement, al-Shabaab gunmen disguised as Somali troops entered the military base and opened fire. Eight al-Shabaab fighters, five AMISOM peacekeepers, and one American civilian contractor were killed. An al-Shabaab spokesperson claimed responsibility for the attack. Hassan Ali Dhoore, an al-Shabaab commander who U.S. officials said was linked to the attack, was killed in a U.S. drone strike in April 2016. (Sources: BBC

News [116], *Independent* [117], Voice of America [118], Global Terrorism Database [119], *Guardian* [120])

- **September 11, 2020:**A suicide bomber detonates his explosives outside of a mosque as congregants depart, following Friday prayers, in the southern port city of Kismayo.
  The attack leaves at least six worshippers dead and another 20 people injured. Al-Shabaab claims responsibility via its Radio Andalus. Sources: Associated Press [121], Al Jazeera [3]
- **September 9, 2020:**A suicide bombing in the Somali capital of Mogadishu kills at least three people, including one child, and injures seven others.
  The attacker targets the Blue Sky restaurant, a popular eatery among government troops and located near an army checkpoint that leads to the presidential palace. Al-Shabaab claims responsibility for the attack in a statement. Sources: Radio Dalsan [122], Associated Press [2]
- **September 7, 2020:**An explosives-laden pickup truck explodes at a military outpost in the Jana Abdalle area of southern Somalia's Lower Juba region, killing three Somali military officers and injuring two others.
  One later dies from his wounds. An American service member is also seriously injured. Though there is no immediate claim of responsibility, the attack comes days after Somali forces, with U.S. military assistance, reclaimed the area from al-Shabaab. Sources: *New York Times* [1], Al Jazeera [3]
- **August 26, 2020:**A United States military airstrike kills six al-Shabaab militants near Darasalam village in the Lower Shabelle region of southern Somalia.
  The operation follows an al-Shabaab attack on Somali forces while U.S. forces were nearby, though no members of either military were wounded. Source: Associated Press [123]
- **August 16, 2020:**A car bomb decimates the security gates leading to the Elite Hotel in the Lido beach area of Mogadishu, allowing five heavily armed Islamist militants to storm the building.
  Somali security forces end the siege after five hours of fighting, but at least 15 people are killed. The hotel is a popular destination for politicians, journalists, activists, and young people. Al-Shabaab claims responsibility for the attack via its radio outlet, Andalus. Sources: Associated Press [124], Deutsche Welle [125]
- **August 12, 2020:**Al-Shabaab fighters attempt to impose taxes on the residents of Shabellow village, but are met with resistance from the civilians.
  Fighting ensues between the militants and armed villagers, leaving at least 10 people dead and five others wounded. Source: Voice of America [126]
- **August 10, 2020:**Al-Shabaab inmates open fire on guards in Mogadishu's central prison, sparking an hours-long gun battle.
  General Mahad Abdirahman, commander of the custodial corps, claims the violence began when an inmate grabbed an officer's gun. However, a security official says the inmates obtained three pistols and six hand grenades, which were smuggled into the prison. At least 19 people, including both prisoners and guards, are killed. Several inmates escape, though at least one is immediately captured. Sources: Voice of America [127], Associated Press [128], Garowe Online [129]
- **August 8, 2020:**A suicide bomber drives a vehicle into the gates of a military base in Mogadishu.
  The explosion, near the newly opened Mogadishu Stadium, kills at least eight people and injures 14 others. Al-Shabaab complains responsibility for the attack. Source: BBC News [130]
- **July 4, 2020:**Two attacks in two of Somalia's largest cities kill five people and wound 16 others.
  One attack occurs in Mogadishu, when a suicide bomber targets a tax collection center in the city's southeastern Hamar Jajab district and injures six people. In the second attack, a land mine detonates near restaurant on the outskirts of Baidoa, the capital of Somalia's Bay region, killing five people and wounding 10 others. Source: *New York Times* [131]
- **June 30, 2020:**At least three mortar blasts hit the Mogadishu Stadium, mere hours after the sports arena reopened.
  Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed attended the stadium's opening ceremony but was not present for the attack. Though there is no immediate claim of responsibility, al-Shabaab is known to target the city. Source: Associated Press [132]
- **June 23, 2020:**An al-Shabaab suicide bomber detonates on a Turkish military base in Mogadishu, as new military cadets perform morning drills.
  Two people are killed, according to police. It is the first time Turkey's largest overseas military installment has been attacked by al-Shabaab. Source: Associated Press [133]
- **May 27, 2020 - May 28, 2020:**On May 27, masked men kidnap seven health workers and a civilian in Balad, near Mogadishu, Somalia.
  The next day, residents of Golaley village near Balad discover the dead bodies of the victims. The seven health workers served with the healthcare and education focused Zamzam Foundation. It is suspected that al-Shabaab was behind the attack. Sources: Reuters [134], Voice of America [135]
- **May 28, 2020:**Al-Shabaab militants detonate an explosive that was concealed in a senior official's car in Mogadishu.
  The attack kills the senior police officer and another passenger. Source: All Africa [136]
- **May 25, 2020:**Al-Shabaab militants attack a camp on the outskirts of Balad district in Somalia's Shabelle region, killing two soldiers.
  Source: All Africa [137]

- **May 24, 2020:**A bomb detonates outside of a camp for internally displaced people north of Baidoa, Somalia. The explosion, which was detonated during Eid al-Fitr celebrations, kills four and wounds more than 15 others. Source: VOA News [138]
- **May 17, 2020:**An al-Shabaab suicide bomber rams an explosives-laden motorized cycle-taxi into a car carrying Ahmed Muse Nur, the governor of the Mudug region in Galkayo. The attack kills Nur and three of his bodyguards. Source: Associated Press [139]
- **April 10, 2020:**Al-Shabaab militants ambush and shoot Osman Hussein Haji Farey, a senior immigration official, in Galkayo, Somalia. The attackers targeted the official outside of a mosque, killing him instantly. Source: Garowe Online [140]
- **April 2, 2020:**U.S. Africa Command launches a drone strike in Bush Madina, about 135 miles west of Mogadishu, targeting al-Shabaab members. The strike kills three militants, including Yusuf Jiis—an al-Shabaab leader responsible for facilitating al-Shabab's attacks throughout East Africa. Source: Military Times [141]
- **April 2, 2020:**An al-Shabaab suicide bomber detonates an explosive next to a vehicle carrying Abdisalan Hassan, the governor of Nugaal region. Abdisalan Hassan dies of his injuries. Source: Ventures Africa [142]
- **March 30, 2020:**An al-Shabaab suicide bomber mounts the vehicle of Abdisalan Hasan Hersi, a governor in Somalia's Puntland, as he parks his car near a police station. The jihadist detonates his explosive device, killing Hersi and seriously wounding a former police commander and a civilian. Source: Defense Post [143]
- **March 25, 2020:**A suicide bomber detonates his explosives vest amid a crowd in a tea shop near Somalia's Federal Parliament in Mogadishu. Al-Shabaab claims responsibility for the attack, which leaves at least two people dead and several others wounded. Sources: ABC News [144], GardaWorld [145]
- **February 19, 2020:**Heavily-armed al-Shabaab fighters storm and briefly occupy the el-Salini military base south of Mogadishu. Somali forces are able to recapture the base, but 12 soldiers are killed in the battle. Shortly thereafter, an al-Shabaab suicide bomber detonates an explosive-laden vehicle on a bridge leading to a military base in the town of Qoryooley, west of the capital. African Union troops repel an onslaught of al-Shabaab fighters who attempt to seize the town. Source: Al Jazeera [146]
- **January 8, 2020:**Al-Shabaab militants detonate a bomb that hits Sayidka junction, a security checkpoint near the presidential palace and other government buildings in Mogadishu, Somalia. The attack kills three and injures 11 others. Source: Reuters [147]
- **December 28, 2019:**A suicide bomber drives an explosives-laden vehicle into a security checkpoint outside of Mogadishu. At least 78 people are killed and another 125 are injured in the attack. Al-Shabaab is suspected as being responsibility for the explosion. The bombing was the worst attack in Somalia since 2017. Source: Associated Press [148]
- **December 24, 2019:**Al-Shabaab militants attack the Gofgadud base in southwest Somalia. The attack kills three soldiers before the Somali troops regain control of the base. It is unreported if any soldiers are wounded. Source: Associated Press [149]
- **December 21, 2019:**Al-Shabaab suicide bombers detonate a vehicle outside Galkayo, Somalia. The attack targeted military commanders as they were leaving a hotel to attend a meeting. The attack killed at least eight people and wounded another 55. Source: Voice of America [150]
- **December 10, 2019:**Five heavily armed gunmen overpower security guards and storm the upscale SYL hotel in Mogadishu. The attackers, claimed by terrorist group al-Shabaab, began shooting at responding Somali security forces. Fighting ensues for seven hours before the militants are overpowered by security forces. The attack kills all five attackers and injures 11. Source: CNN [151]
- **November 20, 2019:**An unidentified gunman shoots and kills Almaas Elman, a Somali-Canadian aid worker and activist, at the Halane complex, a heavily fortified compound that is populated by African Union troops and representatives from United Nations agencies and embassies. No group claims responsibility for the attack. Source: *New York Times* [152]
- **November 19, 2019:**The U.S. launches a drone strike outside the al-Shabaab-held town of Kunya Barow in southern Somalia's Lower Shabelle region. The strike kills an unidentified senior officer in al-Shabaab who had direct ties with al-Qaeda. Source: Associated Press [153]
- **October 30, 2019:**Several mortar rounds land inside the U.N. and African Union compounds in Mogadishu. The attack injures seven. Al-Shabaab claims responsibility for the attack. Also that day, a grenade targets a deputy governor's house in Hirshabele state. The deputy governor and his son are killed in the attack. Al-Shabaab is suspected as being responsible for the attack. Sources: Associated Press [154], Anadolu Agency [155]
- **September 30, 2019:**A car bomber and a group of gunmen strike the Bale Dogle airfield in southern Somalia that American forces use in the fight against al-Shabaab.

No casualties or injuries are reported. Earlier that day, another car bomb detonates in Mogadishu. The explosion misses its apparent target, a group of Italian peacekeeping troops, but injures an unconfirmed number of Somali civilians. Source: *New York Times* [156]

- **September 22, 2019:**Al-Shabaab militants and a suicide bomber storm an army base near Mogadishu.
  Although unconfirmed by Somali military officials, al-Shabaab claims to have killed 23 soldiers. Source: Reuters [157]
- **September 15, 2019:**Al-Shabaab launches a remote-controlled explosion targeting the convoy of Governor of Lower Shabelle.
  The attack kills two and injures four others. Source: Voice of America [158]
- **September 14, 2019:**Al-Shabaab launches a series of attacks in Lower Shabelle region.
  The first attack, in Qoryoley, saw militants using rocket propelled grenades and heavy machines guns. The attack kills nine. The second attack, in Marka, saw militants fire mortars during a visit by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister escapes unharmed, however two civilians are killed. Also on the 14th, in the neighboring Middle Shabelle region, al-Shabaab carries out a roadside explosion. The attack kills five and injures six others. In a separate Al-Shabaab raid, three district-administration officers are forced out of their homes in Beled Hawo town near Somalia's border with Kenya, shot and killed, according to the region's authorities. Sources: Voice of America [158], Bloomberg [159]
- **August 14, 2019:**Al-Shabaab ambushes a newly established military camp in Mogadishu.
  Troops manage to fend off two car bombs and a gun raid, but three people are killed in the attack. Source: CNN [160]
- **July 27, 2019:**A U.S. airstrike kills a key facilitator for al-Shabaab in the Golis Mounain region of Somalia.
  Sources: Reuters [161], Xinhua [162]
- **July 24, 2019:**A member of al-Shabaab detonates explosives during a high-level security meeting at the mayor's office in Mogadishu.
  At least six people were killed and another six were seriously injured, including the mayor, Abdirahman Omar Osman—who ultimately dies from his wounds. Sources: *New York Times* [163], *New York Times* [164]
- **July 22, 2019:**An al-Shabaab militant detonates a vehicle near a busy junction in Mogadishu.
  The suicide attacks claims the lives of 17 and injures 28. Al-Shabaab claims responsibility for the attack which is believed to be in response to the killing of senior al-Shabaab intelligence officer Mohamed Nur Ikhlaas in a U.S. airstrike four days earlier. Source: VOA [23]
- **July 13, 2019:**A suicide car bomber and gunmen attack a hotel in Kismayo, killing 26 and wounding more than 50.
  Al-Shabaab members stormed the hotel after detonating a car bomb in an attack that lasted more than 14 hours. Source: Al Jazeera [165]
- **June 15, 2019:**Al-Shabaab carries out a series of attacks in Mogadishu.
  In one incident, a car bomb explodes near the Somali parliament headquarters, killing at least eight people and injuring 16 others. A separate roadside bomb hits a police vehicle, killing 11 officers inside. Another blast explodes at an intersection leading to the city's airport, but does not cause casualties. Sources: France24 [166], *New York Times* [167]
- **May 22, 2019:**Members of al-Shabaab detonate a car bomb at a security checkpoint near the presidential palace in Mogadishu, killing at least nine people and injuring 13 others.
  Source: Associated Press [168]
- **May 11, 2019:**A small car bomb explodes outside a courthouse in Bosaso, and at least 10 are wounded.
  A local faction of ISIS claims responsibility for the attack, but it is suspected that the attack was orchestrated by Qatari businessmen. Sources: Garowe Online [169], *New York Times* [58]
- **March 23, 2019:**Al-Shabaab gunmen storm a government building in the Somali capital, killing at least five people, including the country's deputy labor minister.
  An hours-long gun fight ensues between the assailants and security forces. Police officials place the death toll at 15 following the battle. Source: *New York Times* [170]
- **February 28, 2019:**Al-Shabaab militants detonate a bomb that tears the façade from a hotel frequented by government officials on the main street of Mogadishu.
  Gunmen then charge the hotel, open fire on its occupants, and kidnap hostages to use as human shields. The attack leaves at least 29 people dead and injures 80 others. Sources: *Telegraph* [171], *New York Times* [172]
- **November 9, 2018:**Al-Shabaab militants detonate a series of car bombs near Somalia's Criminal Investigations Department in Mogadishu and the Sahafi Hotel, which is frequented by government officials and security forces.
  The jihadists attempt to storm the hotel and exchange gunfire with police officers. The bombings and gun attacks kill 52 people and injure at least 100 others, according to hospital officials. Sources: *Washington Post* [173], United Nations [174], Voice of America [175]
- **October 13, 2018:**Al-Shabaab carries out two bombings in the town of Baidoa, a financial hub located between Mogadishu and the Ethiopian border.
  The first blast targets a restaurant and another explosion strikes a nearby hotel, killing 20 people and wounding dozens more. Sources: Associated Press [176], Reuters [177]
- **December 25, 2017 - December 26, 2017:**Al-Shabaab militants launch an overnight ambush of Somali soldiers at a military base in Afgoye, south of Mogadishu.
  Somali forces repel the fighters after several hours. Two civilians are killed in the fighting. Al-Shabaab claims it killed several soldiers and stole military equipment, but the Somali government does not confirm the group's account. Sources: Garowe Online [178], Mareeg Media [179]

- **December 24, 2017:**Al-Shabaab publicly executes five people accused of spying in the town of Idale.
  The executed include a 16-year-old boy accused of working with the Somali government. Source: Voice of America [180]
- **December 14, 2017:**An al-Shabaab suicide bomber disguised as a policeman blows himself up at the General Kahiye Police Training Academy in Mogadishu police station during a police training parade.
  The attack kills at least 18 officers and wounds 15 others. Al-Shabaab claims it killed 27 officers. Source: Reuters [181]
- **October 28, 2017:**Al-Shabaab detonates a suicide car bomb at the entrance gate of Mogadishu's Nasa-Hablod hotel, near the Villa Somalia presidential palace.
  Shortly after, a second car bomb explodes nearby. Gunmen then storm the hotel and hold it under siege for fifteen hours. At least 27 people are killed in the attack. Al-Shabaab claims responsibility, stating that they targeted the hotel because it is often frequented by politicians and security officials. Sources: BBC News [79], CNN [80], Al Jazeera [81], *Guardian* [82]
- **October 14, 2017:**At least 500 people are killed and 312 more wounded when suspected Al-Shabaab militants detonate two truck bombs at a busy intersection in the center of Mogadishu in Somalia's deadliest attack.
  Casualties are far higher than the perpetrators may have intended because the bomb reportedly detonated next to a parked fuel tanker. Al-Shabaab, which claims to be pro-people and antigovernment, does not claim responsibility for the attack. According to Jason Warner, a Somalia expert and professor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, widespread civilian casualties "are bad PR." Unidentified officials speculate that the intended target may have been the nearby foreign ministry, where only a few offices would likely have been occupied on a weekend. Sources: *Wall Street Journal* [83], CNN [39], *New York Times* [37], NPR [84]
- **June 17, 2017:**At least five people are killed and 12 wounded when al-Shabaab militants attack a Somali army base in the Bakol region of southwestern Somalia.
  The militants use machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades to assault the base from different directions, then engage in a fierce gun battle with Somali troops for about one hour. Source: Voice of America [182]
- **June 8, 2017:**Up to 70 soldiers are killed in an attack on a military base in the Somali region of Puntland, including the base's commander and deputy commander.
  Al-Shabaab claims responsibility. The soldiers on the base were part of a Puntland regional force that was supposed to be integrated in an AMISOM-backed national security force. Civilians in the area—including women and children—are also reportedly beheaded during the attack. Source: *Los Angeles Times* [183]
- **May 24, 2017:**At least eight people are killed and 15 others wounded by an al-Shabaab car bombing outside a small restaurant near the Mogadishu seaport.
  Al-Shabaab claims that it was targeting police and intelligence officials. Source: Voice of America [184]
- **May 23, 2017:**A suicide bombing in the Puntland region of northern Somalia kills four people and wounds 18 others.
  According to police, the attack targeted nearby security personnel at a checkpoint. ISIS claims responsibility for the attack through its Amaq news agency. It is the first suicide bombing claimed by ISIS in Somalia. Source: Voice of America [184]
- **April 10, 2017:**An al-Shabaab suicide bomber attacks a Somali army base in Mogadishu, killing at least five soldiers.
  Source: Voice of America [185]
- **April 9, 2017:**Commander of the Somali National Army Gen. Mohamed Ahmed Jimale escapes a car bomb explosion near Somalia's Defense Ministry.
  Authorities accuse al-Shabaab of responsibility. The attack follows a promise by Somalia's president to increase military activity targeting al-Shabaab. Source: Voice of America [185]
- **March 13, 2017:**A Somali military court sentences to death an al-Shabaab militant found guilty of detonating a car bomb at a market in Mogadishu in November 2016.
  Two other alleged al-Shabaab militants are sentenced to 15 years in prison for collaborating with the bomber, while four other suspects are acquitted. Source: Voice of America [186]
- **March 13, 2017:**Al-Shabaab claims responsibility for two car bombs in Mogadishu that kill six people.
  The first bomb targets a hotel frequented by government officials, businessmen, and foreigners, and the second targets a military base. Source: Voice of America [186]
- **February 7, 2017:**A day before Somalia's presidential elections, five mortar rounds explode near the Mogadishu airport and an AMISOM base.
  Local residents blame al-Shabaab for the attacks. Source: Voice of America [187]
- **January 25, 2017:**Al-Shabaab militants attack a hotel and an adjacent building in Mogadishu with two vehicles bombs and gunfire, killing dozens.
  Source: Voice of America [188]
- **January 2, 2017:**Twin suicide car bombs explode near the Mogadishu airport, killing nine people and wounding 21 others.
  The first car bomb targets a checkpoint manned by Somali national security forces. Immediately after the first bomb detonates, a second car drives at a high speed through the checkpoint and detonates outside the hotel. Al-Shabaab claims responsibility for the attack. Sources: Voice of America [189], Voice of America [190]
- **December 11, 2016:**A suicide truck bomb detonates at Mogadishu's main seaport, killing up to 29 people and wounding at least 50 more. Al-Shabaab claims responsibility.

Source: *Telegraph* [88]

- **November 26, 2016:** A suspected al-Shabaab suicide car bomb explodes at a police checkpoint in Mogadishu's Waberi district, killing 25 people and wounding 53 others.
  Sources: BBC News [191], AllAfrica [192]
- **October 25, 2016:** Armed militants in Mogadishu shoot and kill Somali Colonel Abdiasis Araye as he walks to a mosque. Al-Shabaab claims responsibility.
  Sources: *Huffington Post* [193], Reuters [194]
- **August 30, 2016:** A car bomb explodes outside the Presidential Palace and two hotels reportedly frequented by government officials in Mogadishu.
  The attack kills 22 people and wounds 50 others. Al-Shabaab claims responsibility. Source: Reuters [195]
- **June 25, 2016:** Militants detonate a car bomb outside of a hotel in central Mogadishu and storm the building in an attack that kills at least 15 people, including Somali Environment Minister Buri Hamza, and wounds 34 others. Al-Shabaab claims responsibility.
  Sources: CNN [196], Reuters [197], Fox News [198]
- **June 1, 2016:** Militants detonate a car bomb outside of Mogadishu's Ambassador Hotel and raid the building in an attack that kills at least 16 people, including Somali Parliament members Mohamed Mohamud Gurre and Abdullahi Jama, and wounds 55 others. Al-Shabaab claims responsibility.
  Sources: *Independent* [199], AllAfrica [200], CNN [196], CNN [201]
- **May 2, 2016:** Militants ambush Somali forces and capture the town of Runirgood in an attack that reportedly kills at least 22 Somali soldiers.
  Source: AllAfrica [202]
- **April 27, 2016:** Suspected Al-Shabaab militants seize the town of Janale in Somalia's Lower Shabelle region after Somali and AMISOM troops withdraw for an unknown reason, according to local residents, allowing al-Shabaab to take control without resistance.
  Source: Critical Threats [203]
- **April 25, 2016:** An improvised explosive device (IED) detonates next to an African Union military vehicle.
  No casualties are reported. ISIS claims responsibility for the bombing as its first terrorist attack in Somalia. Source: International Business Times [101]
- **April 19, 2016:** Between 10 to 12 children are abducted by al-Shabaab militants from a school in the Harardhere district in Central Somalia.
  Source: *Somali Update* [204]
- **April 17, 2016:** In a drive-by shooting in Mogadishu, suspected al-Shabaab militants kill a woman who worked for the U.N. High Commission on Refugees office and wound at least one other.
  Sources: *Goobjoog News* [205], *Shabelle News* [206]
- **April 13, 2016:** At least three people are killed when hand grenades explode in a busy market in Somalia's southwestern Lower Shabelle region.
  No group claims responsibility for the attack. Source: *Goobjoog News* [207]
- **April 11, 2016:** A car bomb detonates outside the Mogadishu mayor's office, killing five people and wounding five more. Al-Shabaab claims responsibility.
  Source: Reuters [208]
- **April 9, 2016:** A car bomb explodes outside a restaurant frequented by Somali security forces in Mogadishu.
  Three people are killed, including one child. No group claims responsibility for the attack. Source: *Shabelle News* [209]
- **April 7, 2016:** Four men fire mortar shells on the Somali Presidential Palace, killing two civilians and wounding 13 others.
  Sources: *Goobjoob News* [210], Critical Threats [211]
- **February 26, 2016:** Purported al-Shabaab militants attack Mogadishu's SYL Hotel with a suicide car bomb and gunfire, killing at least 14 people.
  Source: Fox News [212]
- **October 7, 2015:** Al-Shabaab militants ambush a vehicle carrying two passengers, including the nephew of Somali president Hassan Sheikh Mohamoud.
  Both passengers die in the attack. Source: Stanford University [213]
- **April 2, 2015:** Al-Shabaab militants attack Kenya's Garissa University in an attack targeting non-Muslim students.
  The militants kill at least 147 students. The terror group claims that the attack was intended to compel Kenya to withdraw its forces from Somalia. Source: Stanford University [213]
- **February 20, 2015:** Militants attack the Central Hotel in Mogadishu, killing 25 individuals, including the deputy major of Mogadishu and a member of Somalia's parliament.
  The deputy prime minister and minister of transport are reportedly injured. Al-Shabaab claims responsibility. Source: Sky News [214]
- **February 21, 2014:** Suspected Al-Shabaab fighters detonate a car bomb outside Somalia's presidential palace and open fire on the palace guards, killing at least 14 individuals.
  Source: Stanford University [213]
- **June 19, 2013:** Al-Shabaab militants, including a suicide bomber, attack the United Nations Development Programme

(UNDP) compound in Mogadishu, killing 22 people and wounding 20 others.
Source: Stanford University [213]

- **April 14, 2013:**Suspected al-Shabaab militants attack a Mogadishu court building and bomb a Turkish aid convoy, killing more than 30 individuals.
Source: Stanford University [213]
- **November 21, 2012:**Ras Kamboni Movement (RKM) militants conduct shootings throughout the southeastern city of Kismayo in response to an alleged grenade attack on the RKM leader's home.
Source: Stanford University [71]
- **August 24, 2010:**Two al-Shabaab suicide bombers attack Mogadishu's Muna Hotel, killing 33 individuals, including four members of parliament.
Source: National Counterterrorism Center [215]
- **May 5, 2010:**Hizbul Islam militants attack and destroy a refugee camp outside Mogadishu, killing two people.
Source: Stanford University [65]
- **December 3, 2009:**A militant disguised in a burqa detonates a suicide bomb during a graduation ceremony for doctors in Mogadishu.
The attack kills three government ministers and 16 other people. Al-Shabaab claims responsibility. Source: National Counterterrorism Center [215]
- **February 24, 2009:**Militants conduct several attacks in Tarabunka, Mogadishu, killing 17 civilians and injuring up to 90 more.
The Islamic Courts Union (ICU) claims responsibility. Source: National Counterterrorism Center [215]
- **February 24, 2009:**Hizbul Islam and al-Shabaab begin a two-day battle against AMISOM forces in Mogadishu, resulting in nearly 50 deaths and 300 injuries.
Source: Stanford University [65]
- **February 22, 2009:**Hizbul Islam and al-Shabaab militants conduct a joint suicide bombing against an AMISOM base in Mogadishu, killing 11 soldiers and wounding 15 more.
Source: Stanford University [65]
- **October 29, 2008:**Al-Shabaab suicide bombers, including American foreign fighter Shirwa Ahmed, conduct five simultaneous attacks against U.N. and government buildings in the Somali cities of Hargeisa and Bosasso.
The attacks kill a total of 29 individuals and wound 36 others. Sources: Stanford University [213], Council on Foreign Relations [216]
- **May 1, 2008:**A U.S. airstrike kills Adan Hashi Ayrow, a Somali Islamic militant leader with ties to al-Qaeda and al-Shabaab, and nine other people in the town of Dhusomareb.
During a telephone news conference with reporters, al-Shabaab spokesman Mukhtar Robow confirms Ayrow among the dead. Source: CNN [217]
- **March 26, 2007:**A militant conducts Mogadishu's first suicide attack against Ethiopian soldiers occupying the city, killing 73 individuals. Al-Shabaab claims responsibility.
Source: Stanford University [213]
- **September 17, 2006:**In the then-capital city of Baidoa, suspected Islamic Courts Union (ICU) militants detonate a car bomb in a failed assassination attempt targeting Somalia's transitional president, Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed.
The attack kills 11 people, including the president's brother and six of the attackers. Sources: *Guardian* [218], *Guardian* [219]
- **1991:**Thousands of Somali civilians are killed or wounded when a power struggle ensues between two warring clan lords, Mohamed Farah Aideed and Ali Mahdi Mohamed, after the fall of dictator Mohammed Siad Barre.
Source: *Atlantic* [220]
- **October 3, 1993:**Somali rebels shoot down two U.S. Black Hawk helicopters, resulting in the deaths of 18 U.S. Army Rangers and one Malaysian man.
Earlier in the day, suspected Somali rebels attack an armored vehicle with a remote control bomb, small-arms fire and rocket-propelled grenades outside the gates of a port used by the United Nations in Mogadishu. Three U.S. Marines and a Somali employee are killed in the attack. Sources: *Atlantic* [220], *New York Times* [221]
- **September 25, 1993:**A Somalia militia thought to be under the control of General Mohammed Farah Aidid shoots down a U.N. Black Hawk helicopter with a rocket-propelled grenade.
Three U.S. soldiers are killed in the crash. Source: *New York Times* [221]
- **August 8, 1993:**Four U.S. soldiers are killed when a landmine explosion tears apart their utility vehicle.
Source: *New York Times* [221]

Domestic Counter-Extremism

Somalia's National Security Plans

On April 16, 2016, under the auspices of 42 partner countries, the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and Federal Member States (FMS) of Somalia reached a political agreement on a security reform named Somalia's National Security Architecture, which was subsequently endorsed by Somalia's National Security Council on May 8, 2017. The agreement outlined a new national security framework for Somalia that would transfer responsibility for the country's security from AMISOM to Somali security forces in upcoming years. The agreement sought to address four main areas of security reform: the size of Somali security forces, their distribution at the Federal and state level, their command and control, and their fiscal responsibilities. (Source: British Government [222])

On May 11, 2017, the 42 international partners, meeting in London, adopted a Security Pact with the FGS which endorsed the April 2016 political agreement, as well as Somalia's existing National Strategy and Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) published in September 2016. The political agreement between the FGS and FMS "recommended" the establishment of a Somali National Army comprised of at least 18,000 troops, excluding the Special Forces, Air Force, and Navy, within six months from June 1, 2017. It also recommended the establishment of a Somali Police Force of 32,000 officers divided into Federal Police and State Police in the same time frame. (Source: British Government [222])

With regard to P/CVE, the Security Pact set forth "milestones" to be reached by specific dates in 2018, 2019, and subsequent years. These "milestones" include the passage of key pieces of legislation by the Somali parliament (such as an amnesty law and counterterrorism law), the development of an agreed P/CVE coordination structure, and the training of P/CVE coordinators at the Federal and state level. P/CVE also aims to launch interventions into identified root causes of violent extremism through policies of reintegration, rehabilitation, educational curriculum development, and oversight of religious schools, and to develop strategic communication strategies to prevent recruitment and radicalization. (Source: British Government [222])

Counter-Extremism Operations

AMISOM and Somali security forces, at times with U.S. assistance, have successfully mounted offensive military operations targeting al-Shabaab and other militant groups. On March 2, 2017, AMISOM and Somali security forces killed at least 57 al-Shabaab fighters and seized a large cache of weapons in a raid on an al-Shabaab base outside Afmadhow. On April 24, 2016, Somali authorities in Mogadishu arrested former al-Shabaab leader Hassan Fanah, who defected and joined ISIS in October 2015. (Source: Associated Press [22], *Shabelle News* [223], Critical Threats [224], Voice of America [225])

On May 5, 2017, an al-Shabaab leader and three of his associates were killed in a raid by the Somali army in the village of Barire in the Lower Shabelle region. One U.S. Navy SEAL was killed and two SEALs were hurt assisting the raid. The Somali government said the al-Shabaab leader's death would "significantly disrupt" the group's operations in the area. Local Somali security forces said the attack was led by a Somali "Danab" commando team, accompanied by U.S. Special Forces. Danab, or "lightning" in English, are U.S.-trained Somali commandos. Five hundred commandos have been trained by U.S. troops toward a total goal of 4,000, according to Somali officials. (Source: Voice of America [225])

On June 11, 2017, Somali and U.S. special forces destroyed an al-Shabaab training base in Somalia's Middle Jubba region, killing eight al-Shabaab fighters. Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo said the strike on the al-Shabaab command and supply hub would "disrupt [al-Shabaab's] ability to conduct new attacks in Somalia." (Source: Voice of America [226])

Beginning in April 2019, AMISOM and Somali security forces launched joint operations to capture al-Shabaab strongholds in Somalia's Lower Shabelle region, including the towns of Sabiid and Bariire. In August 2019, AMISOM and Somali security forces liberated the town of Awdheegle. For years, al-Shabaab had occupied the town, using it as a base for planning and launching terrorist activities. (Source: African Union Mission in Somalia [227])

On March 17, 2020, members of the Somali National Army and Danab commandos launched a military operation to rout al-Shabaab militants from the town of Janaale and surrounding areas in the Lower Shabelle. Federal forces were able to re-capture the farming town, which al-Shabaab militants controlled for years. The offensive was part of Operation Badbaado, a campaign to secure the region south of the capital of Mogadishu. (Source: Defense Post [228])

Extremist and Terrorist Financing

In 2018, Somalia gained membership into the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force, a regional body fashioned after the Financial Action Task Force. According to the U.S. Department of State, the Somali government has worked to strengthen its anti-money laundering and counterterrorism financing bodies, including the country's Financial Reporting Center, which began operating in November 2018. (Source: U.S. Department of State [229])

Rehabilitation and De-Radicalization Program

Somalia offers an amnesty program to "low-risk" al-Shabaab defectors. The program, which began operating in 2012, currently hosts 500 former militants in a camp near Mogadishu. The program aims to reverse the radical propaganda the former al-Shabaab members were fed by terrorist organizations. Then-Somali Minister of Internal Security Abdirizak Omar Mohamed said of the program: "You have to use a soft approach too. You have to open dialogue with [the defectors], engage them, and you have to provide a counter narrative to the [extremist] ideology." The program provides high school level courses, skills training, religious classes, and medical care to the defectors. Participants reportedly remain in the program for up to several months. (Sources: Intelligence Briefs [230], *The Star* [231])

The program also uses former fighters to counter al-Shabaab propaganda online. For example, American Liban Haji Mohamed defected from al-Shabaab in December 2014 and entered the amnesty program. He has assisted Somali officials in identifying al-Shabaab propagandists online and convincing other fighters to defect. In August 2017, after the United States canceled a $5 million reward for his capture, former senior al-Shabaab commander and co-founder Mukhtar Robow turned himself in to the Somali government. Robow, the highest-ranking al-Shabaab official to denounce the terrorist group, pledged his support for the government's reconciliation efforts. (Sources: *The Star* [230], U.S. Department of State [232], Associated Press [176])

In early April 2017, Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo implemented a new, temporary, 60-day amnesty initiative targeting al-Shabaab militants. The president said, "To the members of al-Shabaab, we are taking the fight to you. If you, however, take advantage of my amnesty offer and denounce violence, we will integrate you into our reform program. You have no future with the terrorists, but you can still be part of Somalia's peaceful and prosperous future." Government opponents argued that the government's threats encouraged al-Shabaab to undertake more attacks, "because they are either desperate or want to disrupt the army's plans against them" before the army is fully prepared to take on al-Shabaab. (Sources: Voice of America [226], Voice of America [233], Voice of America [185])

On August 29, 2016, the Somali government announced the start of a two-week online public comment period to collect input on the forthcoming National Strategy on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism. Mustafa Duhulow, Somalia's CVE coordinator, said the National Strategy had been devised over the previous 10 months with input from various FGS ministers, CVE coordinators from five separate Somali regions, religious leaders, business leaders, and others. Those involved decided it was necessary to solicit input from the public at-large. On September 12, 2016, President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo officially launched the National Strategy. According to then-Somali Treasury Minister Abdirahman Omar Osman, the National Strategy "focuses on countering the ideology and narratives of extremist groups that promote destruction and violence… We want to ensure that all religious programs are attuned to the peacefulness of Islam while showing al-Shabab's actions are against the practices of Islam." (Sources: Radio Dalsan [234], AllAfrica [235], Radio Muqdisho [236])

The National Strategy also supports the existing defector program for former militants. The program includes ongoing reconciliation efforts to address reasons why individuals succumb to recruitment efforts of terrorist groups. Al-Shabaab exploits existing grievances within Somalia's clan-based society, including marginalized groups and neglected rural areas. Reconciliation helps communities bolster local resilience against al-Shabaab while reinforcing Somali traditions, values, and cultures. (Source: Radio Dalsan [237])

As part of a five-year U.S. Agency of International Development (USAID)-funded study in Somaliland, an area that is semi-autonomous but internationally recognized as part of Somalia, Mercy Corps concluded that better education and vocational training combined with opportunities to take part in community and civic projects reduced youth participation in violence more than better education and vocational training alone. Secondary education combined with activities like local sanitization and hygiene campaigns or planting trees on school grounds reduced young people's propensity to participate

in violence by 14 percent and their likelihood of supporting violence by 20 percent. Mercy Corps conflict and governance research manager Beza Tesfaye said that the study demonstrated that both the lack of skills and lack of opportunities for young people must be addressed to reduce their participation in and support for violent extremism. (Source: Devex.com [238])

In January 2018, the Somali Ministry of Information announced the launch of a digital counter-extremism center that would seek to prevent youth from joining groups like al-Shabaab and ISIS. According to Information Minister Abdirahman Omar Osman, the center would launch campaigns on social media platforms and state-run media outlets to raise public awareness on countering extremism, security and peacebuilding, as well as discredit terrorist narratives. (Source: Voice of America [239])

Continuing Struggles in the Fight Against al-Shabaab

Since early 2016, FGS and AMISOM bases have been repeatedly attacked by al-Shabaab. FGS and AMISOM also have struggled to control the port town of Marka, which was seized by al-Shabaab in February 2016 but later recaptured by the FGS and AMISOM that July. Al-Shabaab's raids of military bases have allowed them to seize large amounts of military equipment from FGS and AMISOM forces, including weapons, military vehicles, and ammunition. (Source: Long War Journal [240], BBC News [241], Daily Beast [28])

FGS and AMISOM have had some success in driving al-Shabaab out of Somalia's urban areas. Al-Shabaab officially withdrew from Mogadishu in August 2011 under military pressure from AMISOM and the FGS. The FGS has eradicated al-Shabaab in most of the country's urban environments. In October 2014, the FGS seized control of al-Shabaab's last major urban stronghold in the coastal town of Baraawe, along the Indian Ocean. (Source: Combating Terrorism Center [94])

However, al-Shabaab has found shelter in Somalia's rural villages and towns, and inside Kenya and Ethiopia. As FGS and AMISOM troops force al-Shabaab militants from a town, the militants reportedly hide among local populations or in nearby forests and resurface once the military leaves the villages. (Sources: Center for Strategic and International Studies [15], Daily Beast [28])

FGS forces, numbered at around 20,000 troops in March 2016, have been reported to be insufficiently trained to defend against al-Shabaab's hardened force of about 12,000 militants. Furthermore, as Western governments and security agencies have placed increasing priority on the fight against ISIS, they have reduced their financial support to the FGS and AMISOM. For example, in January 2016, the European Union implemented a 20 percent reduction in financial support to AMISOM. (Sources: Daily Beast [28], Daily Nation [242], Somalia Newsroom [243], *Foreign Policy* [244], BBC News [241], Long War Journal [240])

African Union Mission in Somalia

On July 1, 1960, British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland merged to form the independent state of Somalia. Nine years following independence, the Somali government fell to a military coup led by Major General Mohamed Siad Barre. Siad Barre ruled Somalia as a socialist state until January 1991, when opposition clans ousted his regime. Subsequently, southern Somalia spiraled into civil war involving rival clans, warlords, and Islamist militants violently competing for power. By May 1991, the northern clans of the former British Somaliland seceded from Somalia to establish the autonomous region of Somaliland. Somaliland has its own political system and currency and has been the most stable region in Somalia. In 1998, the clans in the northeast established the autonomous region of Puntland, in part to avoid clan warfare in southern Somalia. (Sources: BBC News [245], British Library [246], Global Issues [247], Somaliland Press [248], BBC News [249], BBC News [250], Council on Foreign Relations [10], Bureau of Investigative Journalism [27])

With Somalia a failed state after the collapse of the Siad Barre regime, the United Nations' efforts to provide humanitarian relief to Somalia failed as well due mostly to widespread violence in southern Somalia. As the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) was placed in power by the U.S.-backed Ethiopian intervention in 2006, al-Shabaab emerged to continue its insurgency. The U.N. Security Council granted authority to the African Union to organize a peacekeeping force, known as the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), to help stabilize the country. (Source: AMISOM [251])

Established on January 19, 2007, the majority of AMISOM's roughly 22,000 soldiers come from Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda,

Burundi, Djibouti, and Sierra Leone. AMISOM is funded through a U.N. logistical support package, bilateral donations, and voluntary donations from U.N. Member States. AMISOM originally was mandated to "conduct Peace Support Operations in Somalia to stabilize the situation in the country in order to create conditions for the conduct of Humanitarian activities and an immediate take over by the United Nations." Its original tasks included supporting dialogue and reconciliation in Somalia among all stakeholders; providing protection to Transitional Federal Institutions to enable them to carry out their functions; supporting disarmament and stabilization efforts; facilitating humanitarian operations; and protecting AMISOM personnel, installations, and equipment. (Sources: AMISOM [17])

AMISOM, in cooperation with the Somali army, has ousted al-Shabaab from Somalia's major cities. Al-Shabaab focuses many of its organized attacks against AMISOM bases and its participating countries, primarily Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia. Al-Shabaab reportedly perceives AMISOM as a foreign occupation imposed by Western foreign policy. Since 2014, al-Shabaab has killed more than 200 people in Kenyan towns and villages along the Somali border. In September 2015, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) estimated that at least 1,100 AMISOM soldiers had been killed by al-Shabaab attacks since 2009. (Sources: U.S. Department of State [252], National Counterterrorism Center [253], CNN [33], Council on Foreign Relations [32], BBC News [16], Daily Beast [28] *East African* [254])

In July 2016, the U.N. Security Council extended AMISOM's mission to include measures specific to Somalia's predominant terrorist threat, al-Shabaab. The Security Council decided to authorize AMISOM to "reduce the threat posed by al-Shabab and other armed opposition groups," including the continuation of "offensive operations" against al-Shabaab and armed opposition groups. It also authorized AMISOM to gradually hand over security responsibilities from AMISOM to the Somali security forces. The European Union has been responsible for the payment of troop allowances since October 2015. However, in January 2016, the EU implemented a 20 percent reduction in funding to AMISOM in order to reallocate the money to fight ISIS. (Sources: United Nations [19], AMISOM [18], AMISOM [255], *Daily Beast* [28], European Union [256], AMISOM [257])

AMISOM plans to begin withdrawing from Somalia in 2018 and to complete its withdrawal by the end of 2020, transitioning security control to Somali forces. At a conference on Somalia in London in May 2011, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta said that more needed to be done in Somalia before the planned drawdown in 2018. While acknowledging success in "degrading" terrorists in Somalia and stabilizing the country, Uhuru said that AMISOM still needed support and strengthening, including 4,000 additional troops to liberate areas still under terrorists' control. He urged "predictable and sustained" funding from the United Nations to accelerate AMISOM's exit strategy. On June 22, 2020, the U.N. Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) through August 31, 2020. The Mission's mandate was expanded in order to include support for the FGS and AMISOM, by "providing strategic policy advice on peacebuilding and statebuilding." (Sources: Bloomberg News [258], *The Star* [259], United Nations [260])

In June 2016, Uganda announced plans to end its role in AMISOM by December 2017. Ugandan troops—the first to join AMISOM in 2007—accounted for about one-third of AMISOM forces. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for two 2010 bombings in Kampala, Uganda that killed 76 people. According to the terrorist group, the attacks were in response to Uganda's troop deployment in Somalia. (Source: Voice of America [261])

In 2016, the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) began withdrawing one-third of its approximately 6,000 troops from parts of Somalia, cutting back its efforts to help stabilize the Somali federal government and degrade al-Shabaab. However, the withdrawal allowed al-Shabaab greater freedom of movement to target AMISOM and Somali forces and complicated final AMISOM efforts to clear out al-Shabaab, according to analyses by National Defense University and The Global Observatory. (Source: Royal African Society/AfricanArguments.org [262], Bloomberg News [258], The Global Observatory [263])

U.S. Operations in Somalia

In 1992, with Somalia plagued by clan-based power struggles, ineffective nation-building initiatives, and famine, the United Nations requested military support from the United States. In December 1992, the U.S. sent troops into Mogadishu under a U.N. Security Council-supported intervention. Their mission was to stabilize the southern region from the warring warlords who had killed thousands of civilians. The U.S. intervention ended in August 1993 when militiamen shot down two U.S. Black Hawk helicopters and killed 18 American soldiers during a 15-hour firefight. It was estimated that more than 700 Somali militiamen and civilians were killed during the incident that became known as Black Hawk Down. (Sources:

United Nations [264], U.S. Army [265], Council on Foreign Relations [10], Bureau of Investigative Journalism [27], *NY Daily News* [266])

The U.S. Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) reportedly has carried out covert military operations inside Somalia since 2001, including surveillance, reconnaissance, airstrikes, and assault and capture operations. U.S. drone strikes in the country began in June 2011. The primary targets of these operations have been terrorist organizations, in particular al-Shabaab. JSOC backed the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia in 2006 and used the event as a pretext for JSOC carrying out more intensive operations against militants, often using helicopter and gunship airstrikes and troops on the ground. JSOC forces continue to operate in Somalia. On March 9, 2016, they assisted Somali troops in a raid against al-Shabaab fighters in the town of Awdhegele that killed 15 militants. (Sources: *USA Today* [267], *Washington Post* [268], CBS News [269], *Washington Post* [270], *Daily Mail* [271], BBC News [272])

On May 5, 2017, a U.S. Navy Seal was killed and two other U.S. soldiers were hurt in a firefight. Somali troops and U.S. Special Forces came under attack soon after exiting a U.S. helicopter, which dropped them at a site near a compound housing al-Shabaab militants in the village of Barire. The death marked the first U.S. combat casualty in Somalia since 1993. The Seals were assisting Somali troops in the operation, which killed a senior al-Shabaab leader and three of his associates. (Sources: *Foreign Policy* [273], Voice of America [225])

On September 26, 2016, U.S. troops launched an airstrike against al-Shabaab fighters near the port city of Kismayo in southern Somalia, killing nine. On April 12, 2016, another U.S. drone struck al-Shabaab fighters near Kismayo, killing 12. According to U.S. Pentagon spokesman Capt. Jeff Davis, the U.S. military conducted such strikes when there was an "imminent threat" to U.S. troops deployed in the country. (Sources: CNN [274], Critical Threats [275], Military Times [276])

On April 1, 2016, a U.S. drone strike killed senior al-Shabaab intelligence official Hassan Ali Dhoore and two others in southern Somalia. Dhoore was involved in a Christmas Day 2014 attack at Mogadishu airport and a March 2015 attack at the Maka al-Mukarama hotel, according to U.S. military officials. On March 5, 2016, a U.S. airstrike hit the al-Shabaab training facility Camp Raso, 120 miles north of Mogadishu, killing approximately 150 fighters. U.S. officials believed that these al-Shabaab militants had just completed training for a large-scale attack on U.S. and AMISOM forces. On November 21, 2017, a U.S. airstrike on an al-Shabaab training camp killed over 100 of the group's militants. (Sources: *Guardian* [111], *New York Times* [277], *Los Angeles Times* [278], CNN [279])

In 2013, the U.S. Department of State approved $17 million in assistance to Somalia through 2015. The aid was to assist the Somali Police Forces with building capacity to investigate complex crimes, including terrorism, and effectively prepare and refer cases for prosecution, thereby supporting the countries primary security goals. (Source: U.S. Department of State [280])

On July 25, 2015, then-U.S. President Barack Obama committed the U.S. government to an intensified fight against terrorists in East Africa, increasing support for counterterrorism operations in Kenya and Somalia, including training and funding. The President acknowledged that American drone strikes had reduced al-Shabaab's territory and vowed to "keep that pressure going even as we're strengthening the Somali government." (Source: *Washington Post* [281])

In June 2016, the U.S. Department of Defense proposed $200 million in funding for East Africa under the Counterterrorism Partnership Fund for fiscal year 2017. Part of these funds were to provide "critical armored vehicles" to AMISOM, as well as training on "tactics, driving, equipment maintenance, and radio operation." In December 2016, Congress approved $750 million for a Counter-ISIL Fund, which included support for AMISOM needs. (Source: U.S. Department of Defense [282], National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 [283])

Effective March 29, 2017, President Donald Trump approved recommendations by the Pentagon in February expanding the U.S. military role in Somalia to allow the U.S. greater flexibility to work alongside Somali troops and launch airstrikes against militants. General Thomas Waldhauser, head of U.S. Africa Command, said the United States wished to seize the opportunity to work with newly-elected Somali President Mohamed Abudllahi Mohamed to "train the Somali national security forces to a level that they can take on al-Shabab on their own." (Sources: Associated Press [284], Voice of America [233], *Newsweek* [285])

In April 2017, the Trump Administration designated parts of Somalia as "an area of active hostilities," making it easier for

U.S. military commanders to undertake counterterrorism operations without White House pre-approval. The Pentagon has since doubled U.S. troops on the ground to 500 as of January 2017. U.S. assistance extends as well to combatting terror financing. On April 6, 2017, the U.S. Department of State announced an approximately $1 million contract opportunity to provide counterterrorism finance mentoring and advice to Somalia's Financial Reporting Center. (Sources: U.S. Department of Defense [282], *Foreign Policy* [273], FundingforNGOs.org [286], Voice of America [287], *Wall Street Journal* [288])

On June 17, 2019, the United States announced it would reopen its permanent USAID Mission in Somalia. Though the U.S. government is the largest humanitarian assistance donor to Somalia, the mission has been shuttered for 28 years, having closed in 1991 following civil war and the collapse of the country's central government. (Sources: Voice of America [289], U.S. Agency for International Development [290])

In February 2019, USAID reported on its CVE efforts in Somalia, stating that its Strengthening Somali Governance (SSG) program "helps enhance government outreach, increases citizen participation, improves the functional capacity of key government institutions, and expands women's empowerment and leadership." The USAID Office of Transition Initiatives' Somalia Stabilization Initiative (SSI) assists the Somali government in re-establishing its legitimacy in areas liberated from al-Shabaab, as well as building capacity for local municipalities. SSI provides activities for youth and communities in order to build resiliency to extremism. Another USAID program, Transition Initiatives for Stabilization (TIS+) has promoted dialogue, arts, culture, and sports in areas where al-Shabaab forbids such activity. TIS+ constructed and developed sports facilities and initiatives that serve more than 50,000 at-risk youth across Somalia. (Source: U.S. Agency for International Development [291])

On October 2, 2019, the United States reopened its embassy in Somalia nearly three decades after the country collapsed into civil war and the U.S. military airlifted the ambassador to safety. The U.S. Embassy in Mogadishu had closed in 1991. The U.S. formally recognized Somalia's new federal government in 2013 but had based its diplomatic mission in neighboring Kenya. (Source: Military Times [292])

In March 2020, the U.S. military launched a flurry of drone strikes against al-Shabaab. The strikes occurred amid warnings from counterterrorism officials and intelligence analysts that the terror group had issued specific threats against Americans in East Africa as well as the United States. Al-Shabaab had also increased efforts to expand attack capabilities. In the summer of 2019, an al-Shabaab operative was arrested while attending flight training in the Philippines and another was arrested more recently taking flying lessons in an African country, according to intelligence officials. Al-Shabaab also attempted to procure Chinese-made, shoulder-fired antiaircraft missiles, posing a deadly threat to U.S. aircraft in Somalia. As of March 2020, there are approximately 500 American Special Operations troops stationed at bases across the country, serving in training and advisory roles for the Somali army and counterterrorism forces. American and Western intelligence analysts are also concerned that al-Shabaab could threaten the 3,500 personnel in Djibouti, home to the U.S. Department of Defense's largest permanent base on the continent. (Sources: *New York Times* [7], Military Times [293])

U.K. Presence in Somalia

In May 2016, the U.K. government sent military personnel to assist AMISOM in the fight against al-Shabaab. A total of 70 British soldiers were deployed before the end of 2016 to Somalia to carry out training, medical, logistical, and engineering duties. Britain deployed the soldiers after concluding that AMISOM forces lacked adequate training and required help. "We think Britain has a particular role in training and logistics and expertise and standards, so we want to step up what we are doing," said then-U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron. As of March 2017, Britain paid stipends of 100 U.S. dollars per month to Somali police and soldiers, despite ongoing concerns regarding accountability for human rights practices and command and control inconsistences among security forces. (Sources: RFI [294], *Guardian* [295], *Guardian* [296], Reuters [297])

On January 28, 2017, British Secretary of State for International Development Priti Patel visited Mogadishu where she met with AMISOM leaders and reaffirmed British support for AMISOM. In Mogadishu, Patel announced Britain would provide 10 million British pounds in humanitarian funding to alleviate food and health needs caused by drought in Somalia. Patel said, "AMISOM together with the UK military are playing a crucial role in helping to deliver a stable, prosperous, secure Somalia. Great progress toward peace has been made, but significant challenges remain." (Source: AMISOM [298])

On March 15, 2017, then-British Foreign Minister Boris Johnson met Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi in Mogadishu to pledge additional humanitarian assistance totaling 110 million British pounds. On May 11, 2017, the British government organized and hosted a conference in London to address humanitarian and security challenges in Somalia. Attendees included then-British Prime Minister Theresa May, U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres and the Somali president. Attendees reaffirmed the urgent need to address humanitarian and security needs in the Horn of Africa. At the conference, Guterres urged $900 million in new international aid to Somalia, which Mohamed Abdullahi said was needed to address the "root causes" of violence—abject poverty and mass unemployment. "Too many of our young generation sit idle, creating fertile ground for terrorists to recruit from," he said. (Sources: Associated Press [299], British Prime Minister's Office [300], Voice of America [301])

International Counter-Extremism

Kenya

Neighboring Kenya has taken a lead role in supporting counterterrorism in Somalia, despite having endured heavy losses from terrorist attacks. Kenya remains a target of al-Shabaab terrorism, primarily along its northern border with Somalia. The Kenyan government has worked to prevent the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, including Kenyan nationals, attempting to join al-Shabaab in Somalia or ISIS in Libya, Iraq, or Syria. (Sources: Garowe Online [302], U.S. Department of State [303])

In January 2016, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta called for additional resources for AMISOM, including improved aviation and maritime capabilities. Uhuru's January 2016 announcement followed an al-Shabaab attack on a Kenyan-AMISOM military base in southwestern Somalia, which reportedly killed as many as 140 Kenyan soldiers. In early April 2016, Somali and Kenyan government representatives pledged to work together to fight terrorism and prevent militants from breaching the countries' shared border. (Source: Garowe Online [302])

In May 2017, Uhuru called for an additional 4,000 AMISOM soldiers to help "liberate" areas of Somalia still under terrorists' control and to improve Somalia's readiness to assume security responsibilities once AMISOM is disbanded. At a London conference that month, the region's leaders—including from Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Burundi, and Djibouti—referred to the Somali President Abdulahi Mohamed as a "partner committed to fighting terrorism." (Sources: Office of the President of Kenya [304], Voice of America [305])

Ethiopia

Somalia also maintains mutual cross-border security arrangements with Ethiopia. Ethiopia screens travelers crossing its borders using U.S.-provided technology, and members of Ethiopia's Federal Police attended U.S. Department of Homeland Security border patrol training sessions in Kenya in 2016. The U.S. State Department assesses that Ethiopia routinely supports counterterrorism efforts in Somalia with the Somali National Army and other regional security initiatives. (Sources: Daily Nation [306], Goobjoog News [307], U.S. Department of State [303])

Partnership for Regional East Africa Counterterrorism

Somalia is a member of the U.S.-funded Partnership for Regional East Africa Counterterrorism (PREACT), a partnership created to build the capacity and cooperation of military, law enforcement, and civilian actors across East Africa to counter terrorism. Other participating countries include Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Comoros, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Sudan, and Sudan. PREACT uses law enforcement, military, and development resources to achieve its mission. Its objectives are to reduce the operational capacity of terrorist networks, develop a new rule of law framework for countering terrorism in partner nations, enhance border security, counter the financing of terrorism, and reduce the appeal of radicalization and recruitment to violent extremism. (Source: U.S. Department of State [252])

In 2014, PREACT was able "to build the capacity and resilience of East African governments to contain the spread of, and ultimately, counter the threat posed by [al-Qaeda], al-Shabab, and other terrorist organizations." PREACT supplements the efforts taken by AMISOM, the Somali government, and U.S. forces to eradicate al-Shabaab from the region. Joint training

exercises for participating countries are intended to enhance regional security and cooperation, protect porous borders, and improve responses to terrorist incidents. (Source: U.S. Department of State [252])

Public Opinion

Public opinion is difficult to gauge in Somalia given the lack of public polling information available. Nevertheless, some basic trends can be discerned about how Somalis assess the threats arising from Islamist violence. Compared to other African nations, Somalia is greatly concerned about the dangers posed by Islamic extremism.

ORB International, a public opinion research agency, ran several focus groups with civilians in Somalia's port city of Kismayo in May 2013. The city was an al-Shabaab stronghold until 2011. ORB International's survey findings confirmed that "life in [the city] is harder than ever." One citizen described it as an "open air prison." Although Kismayo was cleared of al-Shabaab by AMISOM forces, the terrorist group has continued to conduct attacks there, and rival militias compete for territory in and around the town. Many survey participants reported that they felt trapped but chose to remain in the city because they feared that safe movement was impossible. (Source: ORB International [24])

The majority of participants reported that they trusted the Federal Government of Somalia, but that they had less faith in the government's ability to effectively control areas outside of Mogadishu. A majority of survey respondents indicated their support for the elimination of al-Shabaab in Kismayo, but some expressed frustration with the constant violence occurring there. According to one female survey respondent from Kismayo, "People did not worry about their security when al Shabaab were here." Although not all respondents supported al-Shabaab's extremist agenda, most felt that the group was able to enforce the law and keep crime rates low. (Source: ORB International [24])