



THE FIGHT AGAINST ALSHABAAB IS FAR FROM OVER

Reviewed by BY M.N Mwendiah

According to security analysts, Al-Shabaab operates in the same territory they operated in two years ago despite the efforts of AMISOM forces and US airstrike to dislodge the militants. The only reasonable assumption to make from this finding is that Al-Shabaab is doing all within its powers to reinvent itself with a view to remaining relevant even in the face of debilitating war. Therefore, a declaration by AMISOM of their plan to hand over the security responsibilities to Somali forces by 2021 is clearly an underestimation of Al-Shabaab's capabilities which is gaining notoriety notwithstanding the casualties inflicted on its militants.

Executive Summary:

The African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) in its bi-weekly Africa Terrorism Bulletin mentioned that out of 614 terrorism related deaths, 190 were killed by terrorist attacks whereas 424 were killed during counter- terrorism operations by security forces. The five countries that were affected, according to a key unit of Peace and Security Department of the AU Commission, between 1st to 15th January 2019, include: Burkina Faso, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, and Somalia.¹

The security situation in the horn of Africa countries in 2019 remains stable but with significant threat from the Somalia based militant group Al-Shabaab, despite the intensified airstrike campaign. Samantha Reho, spokeswoman for the US Africa Command based in Germany, said that the soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division is specialized in air assaults with the main purpose of training and equipping Somalia's army as well as offer security force assistance² to better fight Al-Shabaab. The militants on the other hand have devised new tactics to minimize casualties.³ Aware of the impending airstrikes targeted at them, Al-Shabaab has made significant operational changes key among them being moving in units of 3 or 4 and only converge to plan and carry out attacks. Despite the insistence of the Somali government and AMISOM that the group has been eliminated from the capital, Mogadishu, one of its leaders, Ali Dhere, was recently photographed hosting a charity event near the city.⁴ This paints a picture of a terrorist group trying to win admiration from the populace by addressing their plight, that is, dire need for food and livelihoods.

According to security analysts, Al-Shabaab operates in the same territory they operated in two years ago despite the efforts of AMISOM forces and US airstrike⁵ to dislodge the militants. The only reasonable assumption to make from this finding is that Al-Shabaab is doing all within its powers to reinvent itself with a view to remaining relevant even in the face of debilitating war. Therefore, a declaration by AMISOM of their plan to hand over the security responsibilities to Somali forces by 2021 is clearly an underestimation of Al-Shabaab's capabilities which is gaining notoriety notwithstanding the casualties inflicted on its militants. An attack that took place at an army base in Barire town, 50km southwest of Mogadishu, left 30 soldiers dead. The militants managed to retrieve weapons and military vehicles from the camp thus limiting the available structures put in place in the fight against terrorism.⁶ It is, therefore, essential to match the planned exit by AMISOM from Somalia with the realities in the country. Another reality that the international community needs to contend with is that Al-Shabaab is providing tangible solutions to the ills bedeviling the contemporary Somali society, e.g. government corruption and slow justice systems, thus winning and maintaining support from the citizenry of the territories they operate in.⁷

Clan politics and areas of operation still form a critical component of the "War of Terror" discussions. As have been witnessed before, clans were either punished or supported, depending on the stand they took against or for Al-Shabaab in Somalia. Recruitment processes have always followed the clan dynamics with the response to the Kenyan action being from one clan against the other. There is an interesting development coming out of Somalia with the defection of Robow. On one side, as will be shown, his clan has not faced retaliatory or targeted punishment from the Extremist organization, even when he mentioned

¹Ghana. (2019, January 27). "Worry" as AU report reveals terrorism killed 614 in first 15 days of 2019. Retrieved from Ghana Nws: <https://www.myjoyonline.com/news/2019/January-27th/.php>

² AL Jazeera. (2017, April 16). *US deploys 'a few dozen' troops to Somalia: Pentagon*. Retrieved from Breaking News, World News and Video from Al Jazeera: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/04/deploys-dozen-troops-somalia-pentagon-170416033127155.html>

³ BBC. (2019, January 7). *US attacks on Somalia's al-Shabab increase under Trump*. Retrieved from BBC Africa security correspondent: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-46612542>

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Critical Threats. (2019, January 15). *The Fight Against al Shabaab isn't Over*. Retrieved from Critical Threats: <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/fight-against-al-shabaab-isnt-over>

⁶ Jamhuuriyada. (2018, August 24). *Al Shabaab poses with seized SNA military vehicles*. Retrieved from Jamhuuriyada Online: Laeding Somali News Source: <https://jamhuuriyada.net/2018/08/24/al-shabaab-poses-with-seized-sna-military-vehicles/>

⁷ Critical Threats. (2019, January 15). *The Fight Against al Shabaab isn't Over*. Retrieved from Critical Threats: <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/fight-against-al-shabaab-isnt-over>

his intention to vie for precedence. Additionally, even with the atrocities associated with his participation in Al-Shabaab, the clans are still willing to riot and fight on his behalf. These developments paint a future that centralizes local clan politics over ideological issues, political engagement as a means to end extremism, or a wait and see approach, especially from Al-Shabaab's current leadership.

There is a severe problem to the Somali government which is trying to expel Al-Shabaab from the country but also offers a means of tackling the terror menace by ensuring that governance structures work efficiently to win confidence of the citizenry and dissuade them from the alluring terrorist group. The security instalments working in the horn of Africa are also facing a new phenomenon where Al-Shabaab are fighting ISIS insurgents in Somalia. In June's 2018 security review⁸, mentions of reports had emerged of the rift between Al-Shabaab and ISIS due to a perceived conflict by the ISIS militants with claims of a grand plot to depose Al-Shabaab leader Abu Ubeidha that led to several ISIS militants being captured and publicly executed on suspicions of spying. The squabbles enabled AMISOM troops to counter the militants thus losing their territories. It can therefore be viewed as a positive development with speculations on fatigue that would arise due to fighting both AMISOM and ISIS. However, presence of the two terror organisations is worrisome since although both Al-Shabaab and ISIS are fighting to establish an Islamic caliphate they are pursuing divergent ideologies using equally brutal tactics.

A summary of those involved within the ranks of Al-Shabaab draws attention to the radicalization and recruitment process that is going beyond the Horn of Africa. The joint military attack from the Somali Especial Forces backed by US troops against Al-Shabaab on 13th January 2019 that killed 85 Al-Shabaab show five foreign jihadists from Egypt, Tanzania, Mauritania, Yemen, and Syria. Within the Horn, a new country coming to the radar is Tanzania. We are currently observing radicalization and recruitment beneficiaries from this Nation.

The attack on the 15th, 21st, and 26th January 2019 in Kenya, document some lapses and the need for a keen eye on the security processes in the country. A comparison to previous attack and resources deployed is deemed as a failure of Al-Shabaab's mission of "*Kill one, scare a thousand,*" based on the numbers of lives lost, or the militant group was testing the efficiency of Kenya's security apparatus while responding to terror attacks. An analytical review of these occurrences' points to a test that the Kenyan public and analysts need to be aware of. From a tactical perspective, movement of the violent extremists based on CCTV footage, the time take for the suicide bomber and the handing over of the "suspected package," more questions are raised on the response timelines rather than the intended objectives. Another development is that of suicide bombing. Most of the incidents reported in Kenya have featured grenade attacks, hostage taking, sieges and out right shooting. The Dusit-D2 attack provides a complication to the already existing challenge by introducing suicide missions in Kenya. More initiatives should focus on creating awareness to the general public rather than the "Arming-Debate" that these incidents have brought up. A dipper discussion should also revolve on the response rates from the security agencies while also dealing with the new mode of attack that involves suicide missions.

Finally, the month of December 2018 and January 2019, has suffered 449 deaths including 246 being militant, 113 law enforcement and 90 civilians. From the various attacks, a total of 102 were injured, six being law enforcement and 96 civilians. Though the human capital has a larger impact on programming, the actions from Al-Shabaab foot soldiers is having impact on the response from governments across the region. Intelligence points to paths and routes followed by the Violent Extremists to be through the refugee camps and other areas across the counties documenting some lapses and challenges faced as a nation. However, this news has also raised and brought back to the fore the question of refugees and the need to close down Dadaab. It is time to critically analyse the systems to avoid knee jerk responses.

⁸ Scofield Associates. (2018, June 30). *Security Review (June 2018)*. Retrieved from Scofield Associates- On the Frontlines of Sustainable Solutions Worldwide: <https://scofieldassociates.co.ke/2018/06/30/security-review-june-2018/>

Security Review is a desk-reviewed document by the Scofield Associates team. Reports from media entities, government agencies and Non-Governmental organizations are triangulated and checked with local researchers for consistency, credibility and reliability. The data is analysed using Tableau software where upon recommendations are drawn.

Country Specific Details:

SOMALIA

Many efforts have been made to curb attacks in the Horn of Africa. The Al-Qaeda affiliated Al-Shabaab militant group detonated an under-vehicle improvised explosive device in Mogadishu Killing one person on 2nd December 2018.⁹ The terrorists were, however, on the receiving end when four of its militants were killed in a US airstrike in Awdhlegle Somalia on 4th December 2018. Another attack was carried out by Al-Shabaab militants on 12th December 2018 in lower Shebelle, Somalia. Al-Shabaab captured, shot and killed three men; Farah Aden 28, Mahad Abdullahi Abukar 29, and Mohamed Tifow Heydar 59, in a public execution. Aden and Abukar were Government soldiers while Heyder, a tribal elder who was among the Electoral College and voted for members of the 10th parliament of Federal government of Somalia.¹⁰

News of Mr. Robow's arrest on 13th December 2018 triggered street protests in Baidoa as the government accused him of being a security threat, the clash left at least 11 people including soldiers and civilian's dead. His standing with the government collapsed after he announced his candidacy to become president of South West state. However, Somali clan politics is powerful and Mr. Robow belongs to the Leysan sub-clan, one of the largest in the state. Mr. Mukhar Robow defected from Al-Shabaab in 2017 where he had trained in Afghanistan and was a founder member of the Al-Qaeda-linked group.¹¹

The US military's Africa Command (AFRICOM) on 17th December 2018, claimed to have killed 62 members of the Al-Shabaab Islamist militia in a series of six airstrikes in the coastal region south of Somalia's capital of Mogadishu. The pentagon insisted that there were no collateral civilian casualties, following a longstanding ground rule that anyone killed by American bombs and missiles is a targeted militant.¹² On 22nd December 2018, at least 13 people were killed and 17 wounded in a car bomb attack close to the presidential palace in Mogadishu, and Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack. Among those killed were a journalist, two security personnel and a driver working for a local station.¹³ On Christmas day i.e. 25th December 2018, Al-Shabaab militants were suspected to have planted an IED which injured 4 KDF soldiers who were travelling in a van along the Kenya Somalia border.¹⁴

An attack was carried out on 30th December 2018 by Al-Shabaab militants who briefly seized an army base from the army force near Baidoa town, 250km southwest of the capital Mogadishu. Harun Macruf, a VOA journalist said that at least 20 people had been killed nine being government soldiers and 11 militants. Among the militants killed were two Al-Shabaab commanders identified as Iftin and Abu Sa'ad. There were no recorded statements on the attack from the Somali military officials or the militants.¹⁵

⁹ Somalia: Car bomb attack in Mogadishu December 2. (2018, 12 3). Retrieved from www.garda.com:https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/181381/somalia-car-bomb-attack-in-mogadishu-december-2

¹⁰ Snow, J. (2018, December 12). Somalia's Al Shabaab executes 3 men in Lower Shabelle. Retrieved from Mareeg Media Somalia and World News: <https://mareeg.com/12/12/2018/somalias-al-shabaab-executes-3-men-in-lower-shabelle/>

¹¹ BBC. (2018, December 14). Somalia violence: Deadly Baidoa clashes over Robow arrest. Retrieved from BBC - Homepage: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-46566484>

¹² Auken, B. V. (2018, December 18). Bombings kill 62 in Somalia amid escalating US scramble for Africa. Retrieved from World Socialist Web Site: <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2018/12/18/soma-d18.html>

¹³ France 24. (2018, December 22). Deadly blast near Somalia's presidential palace. Retrieved from www.france24.com:https://www.france24.com/en/20181222-somalia-mogadishu-car-bomb-blast-al-shabaab-presidential-palace-dead-terrorism

¹⁴ Counter-IED Report . (2018). Four KDF soldiers injured after IED goes off on military van.

¹⁵ Somalia news. (2018, December 30). Deadly attack on army base kills 20 in Somalia. Retrieved from Mareeg Media Somalia and World news: <https://mareeg.com/deadly-attack-on-army-base-kills-20-in-somalia/>

Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) officers on 1st January 2019 killed seven militants and seized nine AK 47 rifles, 10 magazines, two rocket propelled grenade launchers and three grenades. According to a statement by KDF's public affairs office, the incident occurred at 11:00 A.M along Tabda-Delahola supply route. Two KDF soldiers sustained injuries during the gun fight. KDF Spokesman P.M Njuguna stated that the soldiers will remain vigilant and relentlessly pursue terrorists so as to ensure peace and security in Kenya as well as support AMISOM operations in order to stabilise Somalia.¹⁶

There was a joint military attack from the Somali Especial Forces backed by US troops against Al-Shabaab on 13th January 2019. The coalition forces raided on Al-Shabaab targets in Baladul Amin and Hanti Wadaag neighbourhoods near Janalle town, 91 km away from Somali capital Mogadishu. At least 85 Al-Shabaab fighters were killed alongside five foreign jihadists from Egypt, Tanzania, Mauritania, Yemen, and Syria. The Al-Qaeda inspired group has lost major towns in south and Central Somalia to African Union troops and Somali army forces.¹⁷ On the same day, an Attack was carried out 500km to the south of the capital of Mogadishu where the Al-Shabaab militants denoted a suicide car bomb near the entrance of the Military base, hence gaining entrance and they allegedly killed 41 soldiers¹⁸. The militants conducted another bomb attack near Burhakaba town; they claimed to have killed 43 Ethiopian soldiers serving under African Union force in Somalia.¹⁹

On 18th January 2019, heavily armed Al-Shabaab fighters ambushed a convoy of Ethiopian troops travelling along Baidoa-Burhakaba road that lies about 15km west of the town. The two military trucks were destroyed after they overran Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) buried on the road. Both AMISOM and Ethiopian commanders have not made any statements in regard to the said attack.²⁰ On 19th January 2019, America launched an Airstrike near Jilib, Middle Juba Region, Somalia, which killed 52 militants, this was in response of Al-Shabaab attack against the Somali National Army Force²¹. Many efforts are being made to reduce attack against the people of Somalia, reduce direct terror attacks, stealing humanitarian aid, extort the local populace to fund its operations, and shelter radical terrorists.

On 21st January 2019, a bomb explosive fitted in a car where Syrian Nationals were travelling, went off at Sodonka venue in Mogadishu. It is believed that the device was planted in the car while they were playing Football, though no group has claimed responsibility, there are high chances that either al-Shabaab or Al Qaeda is to blame.²² On January 26, 2019, Al-Shabaab ambushed a Djibouti AMISOM military convoy in middle Shabelle region of Somalia leading to an unconfirmed number of casualties.²³

In an interesting turn of events, Al-Shabaab militants ambushed ISIS fighters in Barossa city in Puntland on January 28, 2019, causing an hour-long standoff between the two terrorist

¹⁶ Okubasu, D. (2019, January 1). *KDF Kills 7 Al-Shabaab Militants in Somalia, Recovers Grenades*. Retrieved from Kenyans.co.ke: <https://www.kenyans.co.ke/news/35678-kdf-kills-7-al-shabaab-militants-somalia-recovers-grenades>

¹⁷ Snow, J. (2019, January 13). *Foreign Jihadists among 85 Al Shabaab killed by US troops in Somalia*. Retrieved from Mareeg Media Somalia and World news: <https://mareeg.com/foreign-jihadists-among-85-al-shabaab-killed-by-us-troops-in-somalia/>

¹⁸ The National. (2019, January 20). *US says air strike killed 52 Al Shabab militants who attacked Somali base*. Retrieved from www.thenational.ae: <https://www.thenational.ae/world/africa/us-says-air-strike-killed-52-al-shabab-militants-who-attacked-somali-base-1.815447>

¹⁹ Snow, J. (2019, January 13). *Foreign Jihadists among 85 Al Shabaab killed by US troops in Somalia*. Retrieved from Mareeg Media Somalia and World news: <https://mareeg.com/foreign-jihadists-among-85-al-shabaab-killed-by-us-troops-in-somalia/>

²⁰ *Somalia: Al Shabaab Ambushes Ethiopian Troop Convoy Near Burhakaba*. (2019, January 19). Retrieved from Business and Financial - International News, currencies and economic indicators: <https://menafn.com/1097995390/Somalia-Al-Shabaab-Ambushes-Ethiopian-Troop-Convoy-Near-Burhakaba>

²¹ The Guardian. (2019, January 19). *US airstrike in Somalia kills 52 al-Shabaab fighters, military says*. Retrieved from www.theguardian.com: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/19/us-airstrike-somalia-kills-52-al-shabaab-fighters>

²² *Somalia: Al Shabaab Ambushes Ethiopian Troop Convoy Near Burhakaba*. (2019, January 19). Retrieved from Business and Financial - International News, currencies and economic indicators: <https://menafn.com/1097995390/Somalia-Al-Shabaab-Ambushes-Ethiopian-Troop-Convoy-Near-Burhakaba>

²³ Shabelle Radio. (2019, January 27). *Al-Shabaab Ambushed Djibouti's Military Convoy In Somalia*. Retrieved from www.radioshabelle.com: <http://radioshabelle.com/al-shabaab-ambushed-djiboutis-military-convoy-in-somalia/>

groups.²⁴ There was also an Al-Shabaab attack towards Puntland security forces barracks by use of a grenade near Bossaso, a port city in Puntland in Northern Somalia but security forces managed to arrest and detained several suspects in connection with the attack²⁵. On the same day, AMISOM forces in collaboration with the Somali national army killed a senior Shabaab official and burned Al-Shabaab cars in a joint operation in Hiraan region, central Somalia.²⁶ Al-Shabaab detonated a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) near the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Bondere district in Mogadishu, Somalia's capital, on 29th January 2019. The explosion killed two civilians and injured five others. Al Shabaab claimed to have killed seven Somali government officials in the attack, but this has not been confirmed.²⁷

KENYA

On 15th January 2019, at around 3pm, Kenya was shocked by the news of the Terrorist attack in the popular Dusit complex, which was carried out by six Al-Shabaab members one being a suicide bomber.²⁸ The militants were heavily armed with bombs and automatic rifles, fortunately many were able to escape, but 21 lives were lost, and multiple injured. Al-Qaeda general command praised Al-Shabaab for their attack at Dusit D2 hotel in the name of “Jerusalem will never be Judaized” campaign.²⁹ In comparison to previous attack and resources deployed by Al-Shabaab, the Dusit attack is deemed by security analysts either as a failure of Al-Shabaab’s mission or the militant group was testing the efficiency of Kenya’s security apparatus while responding to terror attacks. According to Dr. Maluki, the Dusit attack could have gone down as the worst in modern African history were it not that Kenya’s security forces sprang into action with speed.³⁰ Another unique feature of the Dusit attack was that the militants deployed a suicide bomber to detonate a bomb before the mass shooting began, which has never happened in past attacks. This calls for a rethink by the security persons on security resources deployed in buildings and public places frequented by many people.

After the deadly attack in Dusit Complex Nairobi, Al-Shabaab conducted another attack on 21st January 2019 at a Chinese-owned construction company in the north-eastern region about 50km from Garissa town, the assailants wounded 4 people, and this was due to the quick actions taken by the police and the alert given from the public³¹. Kenya later announced that it will arm private security officers guarding public places and this has brought forth mixed reactions over the decision. Mr. Fazul Mahamed, Director General of the Private Security Regulatory Authority, said that the armed contractors will guard key installations where there is a lot of human traffic. Private security companies welcomed the decision as they had been requesting for the same action, however, security experts have voiced concern over the haste with which the Government acted dubbing it poor as it will double the number of arms in private hands as well as the thoughts of Kenyan authorities fighting terrorism using force.³²

²⁴ Strategic Intelligence . (2019, January 29). *Heavy Fight Erupts as Al-Shabaab again Clash with Islamic State in Bari Region, Somalia*. Retrieved from [www.intelligencebriefs.com: https://intelligencebriefs.com/heavy-fight-erupts-as-al-shabaab-again-clash-with-islamic-state-in-bari-region-somalia/](https://intelligencebriefs.com/heavy-fight-erupts-as-al-shabaab-again-clash-with-islamic-state-in-bari-region-somalia/)

²⁵ Shabelle Radio. (2019, January 29). *Two Grenade Attacks Reported In HirShabelle And Puntland States*. Retrieved from [www.radioshabelle.com: http://radioshabelle.com/two-grenade-attacks-reported-in-hirshabelle-and-puntland-states/](http://radioshabelle.com/two-grenade-attacks-reported-in-hirshabelle-and-puntland-states/)

²⁶ Shabelle Radio. (2019, January 28). *Somali, AU Troops Carry Out A Joint Operation In Central Somalia*. Retrieved from [www.radioshabelle.com: http://radioshabelle.com/somali-au-troops-carry-out-a-joint-operation-in-central-somalia/](http://radioshabelle.com/somali-au-troops-carry-out-a-joint-operation-in-central-somalia/)

²⁷ Africa News. (2019, January 29). *Somalia: car bomb explosion kills at least two*. Retrieved from [africanews: http://www.africanews.com/2019/01/29/somalia-car-bomb-explosion-kills-at-least-two/](http://www.africanews.com/2019/01/29/somalia-car-bomb-explosion-kills-at-least-two/)

²⁸ Wikipedia. (2019, January 15). *Nairobi Dusitd2 complex attack*. Retrieved from [wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nairobi_Dusitd2_complex_attack](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nairobi_Dusitd2_complex_attack)

²⁹ Strategic Intelligence . (2019, January 29). *Heavy Fight Erupts as Al-Shabaab again Clash with Islamic State in Bari Region, Somalia*. Retrieved from [www.intelligencebriefs.com: https://intelligencebriefs.com/heavy-fight-erupts-as-al-shabaab-again-clash-with-islamic-state-in-bari-region-somalia/](https://intelligencebriefs.com/heavy-fight-erupts-as-al-shabaab-again-clash-with-islamic-state-in-bari-region-somalia/)

³⁰ Maluki, D. (2019, January 20). Kenya’s security forces did better this time. But there are still gaps. *The Conversation*.

³¹ Agencies. (2019, January 21). *Kenyan police repel suspected terror attack in Garissa*. Retrieved from [The East African-Understanding the region: https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/ea/Kenyan-police-repel-suspected-terror-attack-in-Garissa/4552908-4944760-hrqqdez/index.html](https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/ea/Kenyan-police-repel-suspected-terror-attack-in-Garissa/4552908-4944760-hrqqdez/index.html)

³² Aljazeera. (2019, January 31s). *US army says at least 24 al-Shabab members killed in air strike*. Retrieved from [Aljazeera: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/01/army-24-al-shabab-members-killed-air-strike-190131164732686.html](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/01/army-24-al-shabab-members-killed-air-strike-190131164732686.html)

There remain consistent accusations of refugee camps in Kenya being transit points as well as recruitment grounds for terrorists. Interviews from some of the refugees point to Al-Shabaab's motive of targeting "disaffected refugees" for recruitment due to their vulnerability to radicalization.³³ One of the attackers at the Dusit D2 attack had been traced to Dagahaley Camp in Dadaab. It is at the camp that he maintained communication and received the support to organize the attack³⁴. This a challenge Kenya grapples with due to the pressure from the international community to commit to the principle of non-refoulement. The camps however pose a threat to Kenya's national security through harbouring terror elements.

On 17th January 2018, 17 people were arrested at a hideout in Samburu town. The two ladies and 15 men were believed to be at the age of 18-27 years coming from Tana river, Kilifi, Nakuru, Baringo and Kisii county. The youth were in hideout as they waited to be transported to Somalia, in high hopes of huge salaries³⁵. In another incident, a 23-year-old former al-Shabaab trainee surrendered to the police station in Nakuru, on 23rd January 2019. The young man stated that he had escaped from the training grounds in Bombolulu Mombasa and now fears for his life, it is unclear the situation that led to his escape.³⁶ An improvised explosive device (IED) detonated near a cinema in Nairobi, Kenya on 26th January 2018. A man hired a porter to push his luggage, which later exploded after the man left the scene. The explosion injured two civilians³⁷. The scene of the explosion was cordoned off for a few days as investigations were ongoing by law enforcement.

Kenya police detained 17 suspects arrested over supposed links with Somalia on 29th January 2018. This was after they were found in a two-bedroom house where police claim to have found counterfeit goods. The suspects aged between 18 and 27 years were thought to be new recruits and were on their way to Somalia to join the Al-Qaeda-linked terrorist group.³⁸ On the same day, twelve terror suspects were arrested in Dadaab refugee camp during a recent security operation that was conducted at the camp³⁹. The Dadaab refugee camp located at Garissa county hosts more than 250,000 registered refugees and asylum seekers in four camps. The suspects were all believed to be terrorists with one of the suspects having two New Zealand passports in different names⁴⁰. Investigations into this case are still ongoing. On 30th January 2019, the United States forces conducted an airstrike in Shebeley, Hiran region killing 24 Al-Shabaab militants⁴¹. The airstrike is part of the recent sustained military campaign to weaken the Al-Shabaab militants. Al-Shabaab are suspected to have planted a roadside bomb in Lamu County where upon detonation killed three civilian passengers on a merchandise truck.⁴² 10 people were arrested on 31st January 2019 over suspected links with extremism with one having two New Zealand passports. Kenya's Interior Minister Fred Matiangi said the crackdown followed on alleged extremists at the Dadaab refugee camp that hosts at least 200,000 Somali refugees.⁴³

³³ Avery Burns. (2010). Feeling the Pinch: Kenya, Al-Shabaab, and the East Africa Refugee Crisis. *Refuge*, 5-15.

³⁴ John Kamau (2019, February 4th) Police trace Dusit attack suspects to Dadaab, Retrieved from <https://nairobi.news.nation.co.ke/news/142681>

³⁵ Andrew Kasuku (2019, January 28) 17 suspected al Shabaab recruits arrested in Samburu, Retrieved from <https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2019-01-28-17-suspected-al-shabaab-recruits-arrested-in-samburu/>

³⁶ Shiundu, L. (2019, January 23). 23-year-old al-Shabaab trainee surrenders to police in Nakuru Read more: <https://www.tuko.co.ke/296733-23-year-al-shabaab-trainee-surrenders-police-nakuru.html#296733>. Retrieved from Kenyan News Today and Breaking News in Kenya: <https://www.tuko.co.ke/296733-23-year-al-shabaab-trainee-surrenders-police-nakuru.html#296733>

³⁷ Reuters. (2019, January 26). Blast near cinema in downtown Nairobi injures two: police. Nairobi, Nairobi, Nairobi.

³⁸ Tamba Jean-Mathew III. (2019, January 30). Kenyan police detain 17 al-Shabaab suspects. Retrieved from Africa Daily Voice: <https://africandailyvoice.com/en/2019/01/30/kenyan-police-detain-17-al-shabaab-suspects/>

³⁹ The Herald. (2019, January 29). Kenyan police arrest 12 terror suspects at refugee camp. Retrieved from herald: <https://www.herald.co.zw/kenyan-police-arrest-12-terror-suspects-at-refugee-camp/>

⁴⁰ The Herald. (2019, January 29). Kenyan police arrest 12 terror suspects at refugee camp. Retrieved from herald: <https://www.herald.co.zw/kenyan-police-arrest-12-terror-suspects-at-refugee-camp/>

⁴¹ Aljazeera. (2019, January 31s). US army says at least 24 al-Shabab members killed in air strike. Retrieved from Aljazeera: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/01/army-24-al-shabab-members-killed-air-strike-190131164732686.html>

⁴² Daily Nation. (2018, December 8). 3 injured as lorry runs over IED in Sankuri, Lamu County. Retrieved from www.nation.co.ke: <https://www.nation.co.ke/counties/lamu/3-injured-in-Lamu-IED-attack/3444912-4886910-s2xry/index.html>

⁴³ Associated Press. (2019, January 31). Kenya says New Zealander arrested in crackdown on extremism. Retrieved from News24-South Africa's leading source of breaking news: <https://www.news24.com/Africa/News/kenya-says-new-zealander-arrested-in-crackdown-on-extremism-20190131-2>

ETHIOPIA

An armed group from Somalia crossed over to Ethiopia on 27th December 2018, killed 22 people and injured 50. The attack lasted up to nine hours in the town of Gehandale, in Warder Zone. There were no clear motives of the attack.⁴⁴ On 28th January 2019, the president of Ethiopia, H.E. Sahle-Work Zewde, during the third peacekeeping ministerial preparatory meeting on women, peace and security made her opening remarks stating that the need for women to equally participate in matters of peacekeeping is important as it has mostly been considered a male domain. She also added that Ethiopia is committed to supporting the UN Secretary-General's Gender Parity strategy. Similarly, the State Minister of Defence of Ethiopia, Ambassador Lelaalem Gebreyohannes touched on the current geographic span of UN peace operations, the bulk of which are in Africa, and underscored that 'we have a major stake in strengthening the role of women in peacekeeping in our quest to promote and protect women and girls' human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in fragile, conflict, and post-conflict settings.⁴⁵

The African Union Mission in Somalia on 31st January 2019 announced a new force commander to lead its troops in the fight against Al-Shabaab insurgents. Lt. Gen. Tigabu Yilma Wondimhunegn from Ethiopia took up office, from Lt. Gen. Jim Beesigye Owoyesigire, who has served in that capacity since January 2018. Ethiopia has over 4,200 soldiers serving as part of AMISOM. An unspecified number of Ethiopia National Défense Force, (ENDF) soldiers also operate in Somalia under bilateral arrangements between Mogadishu and Addis Ababa.⁴⁶

Conclusion:

In the month of December and January, there have been 449 deaths, 246 being militant, 113 law enforcement and 90 civilians. From the various attacks, a total of 102 were injured, six being law enforcement and 96 civilians. Confirmed kills of Al-Shabaab militants by the US military's Africa Command (AFRICOM) via airstrikes is proving to be an operative method in the steadily escalating US air war in Somalia with records from November killing 37 militants, October killing 60 and November 2017 killing 100.⁴⁷

Security analysts have questioned the effectiveness of airstrikes in weakening Al-Shabaab or its leadership due to the opposite effect it has on the militants as they become even stronger, capturing more towns, replacing both leadership and insurgents, and executing more lethal attacks in Somalia. A study published in the Long War Journal found that Al-Shabaab launched 418 attacks between October 2017 and April 2018 which coincides within the six-month period that had intensified air campaigns by the United States. Some preferred recommendations included;

1. Minimize the number of airstrikes and lethal operations, both in terms of solo U.S. operations and those involving partners, particularly in populated areas
2. The need for local and government institutions regarded as legitimate in order to counter Al-Shabaab's narrative of foreign occupation.
3. Strengthening the Somali National Army with both technical and financial assistance.
4. The need for the U.S. to shift from its current approach of trying to defeat al-Shabaab militarily to a focus on empowering local communities.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ <https://ethsat.com/2018/12/twenty-two-ethiopians-killed-in-cross-border-attack-from-somalia/>

⁴⁵ UN. (2019). *Women Peace and Security preparatory meeting held in Addis Ababa*. UN Office to the African Union.

⁴⁶ Shaban, A. R. (2019, February 2). *Ethiopia finally accepts leadership of Al-Shabaab combat in Somalia*. Retrieved from Africanews- Latest breaking news, daily news and African news: <http://www.africanews.com/2019/02/02/ethiopia-finally-accepts-leadership-of-al-shabaab-combat-in-somalia/>

⁴⁷ The Bureau of Investigative Journalism. (-, - -). *Somalia: Reported US actions 2018*. Retrieved from The Bureau of Investigative Journalism: <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/drone-war/data/somalia-reported-us-actions-2018>

⁴⁸ Hassan, A. (2018, December 6). *U.S. Lethal Operations in Somalia Are On the Rise. But Are They Effective?* Retrieved from Home Page- Just Security: <https://www.justsecurity.org/61708/u-s-lethal-operations-somalia-rise-effective/>

South Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania, Sudan, Eritrea, and Djibouti have had minimal terrorism activities whereas Somalia and Kenya have been on the receiving end. The war against terror in horn of Africa seems to be far from over with the intermittent but deadly attacks carried out by the Somali based terrorist group Al-Shabaab. Terrorism seems to be taking root in Somalia seeing that Al-Shabaab are still occupying pretty much the same territory they used to occupy three years ago despite the intervention of the AMISOM forces. The increasing recruitment campaign by the terror outfits is also an issue calling for a rethink of counter terror strategies applied in the past.

A new phenomenon where Al-Shabaab is deploying suicide bombers in Kenya, exemplified by the Dusit D2 attack, is a worrisome trend which also calls for a deeper thinking among security stakeholders. Also, terror outfits emerge from politically disgruntled groups such as those in South Sudan calls for a more serious consideration and reformulation of terror policies in such countries. Another area worthy of research is the clashing of diverse terror groups that is Al-Shabaab and ISIS in Somalia. It would be interesting to see how the dicey relationship between Al-Shabaab and ISIS plays out seeing that they both must contend with AMISOM forces in addition to their own deadly rivalry.

Finally, it suffices to say that war on terror in the horn of Africa is not yet over yet and plans to withdraw troops should only be considered after careful consideration of the situation obtaining in Somalia. Importantly, security stakeholders in the horn of Africa will have to contend with the high number of recruits joining Al-Shabaab ranks from the region, ostensibly, pushed to join militancy by structural grievance generating issues such as lack of livelihood opportunities in their own countries. It is, therefore recommended that inclusion of youth in productive economic activities is more likely to dissuade them from the allure of earning a decent livelihood after joining militancy.

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SCOFIELD ASSOCIATES LIMITED
3rd Floor Mayfair Suite, Parklands Road - Westlands,
P.O. Box 336-00621, Village Market Nairobi
Telephone 020 7868306 or 0731055306
Email: info@scofieldassociates.co.ke
www.scofieldassociates.co.ke