

Security Review (1st March-31st March 2017)

Coverage: Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia

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INTRODUCTION

On the 8th of March 2018, the United States listed two Kenyan Al-Shabaab leaders, Ahmad Ali and Abdifatah Abdi, as global terrorists. Ahmed Ali was known to be the groups' Kenyan branch operations leader and routinely targeted Kenyan AMISOM troops in Somalia. The State Department cited the January 2016 attack on Kenyan AMISOM troops in El Adde, Somalia which left about 100 KDF soldiers dead, and an unknown number missing; as one of the activities, he was involved in. His counterpart Abdi, on the other hand, was listed and put on the Kenyan government's wanted list of terrorists known or suspected to be members of Al-Shabaab in 2015. The police reported that Abdi recruited members who provided support to Al-Shabaab and engaged in acts that threaten peace, security or stability of Somalia. The Kenya police have also revealed the supreme court area in Nairobi as a target by Al-Shabaab. According to the documents profiling the suspects, it was also disclosed that one Adbimajit Hassan Adan worked closely with Anthony Kitila Makau, Mohamed Osman Nane, John Kiarie, and Lydia Nyawira Mburu in the plot.

Development partners and international organizations have had discussions on providing a lasting solution to the issues facing Somalia. Top of the agenda is the need to remove the troops from Somalia at a time when it is ready to self-govern and deal with internal challenges. In a meeting held in Kampala Uganda, AMISOM leaders decided that it was not yet time for the troops to pull out of Somalia. President Museveni convened the meeting in the wake of challenges AMISOM was facing, characterized by a mismatch between the mission ideas and resources. He called upon the United Nations council not to repeat the same mistakes made in Somalia. The meeting was attended by President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed of the Federal Republic of Somalia, and Gaston Sindimwo, First Vice

President of Burundi, as well as officials from Kenya, Djibouti, and Ethiopia.

Intelligence gathering and sharing aids projects and programs in Somalia. This month, an intelligence and information sharing conference was held in Mogadishu, Somalia. The aim was to forge closer working ties between various intelligence actors in Somalia. The conference was to explore access to non-traditional information sources, discuss enhancement of intelligence sharing and dissemination, and emerging threats from terror group Al-Shabaab, even as the militants find themselves extremely weakened from the onslaught from the Federal Government, AU and partner forces.

News outlets noted that China's security footprint in Africa has been expanding quietly alongside its deepening economic

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interests across the continent. Experts disagree about whether China might, in the future, protect its interests through force. But they see its presence in Africa as a testing ground for a new kind of multilayered engagement around the world.¹ In late February, the Djibouti government terminated a contract with Dubai-based port operator DP World to run the Doraleh Container Terminal (DCT), on the grounds it was "contrary to the fundamental interests of the nation. Concerns in Washington were said to be growing amid reports that China is poised to gain control of a major commercial port on the Horn of Africa, further consolidating the country's influence in the critically strategic region."²

More than 8,000 Ethiopian refugees, arrived in Moyale town, Marsabit county, after being flushed out of their homes by soldiers. They fled the country in the wake of their government's crackdown on dissidents and blamed the Ethiopian government of abdicating its responsibility of protecting its citizens. The impact of alleged government action on refugees will not only be felt by the refugees but also the new hosting country; Kenya.

MONTHLY SECURITY DETAILS

SOMALIA

On 1st March, officials from countries that contribute to AMISOM, the African Union force in Somalia, were to meet in Kampala, Uganda to discuss a transitional security plan for the troubled country. While AMISOM has made gains in Somalia, the risks still presented by militant group Al-Shabaab remain intense due to inadequate funding and troop numbers. Over the past

few years, AMISOM has pushed Al-Shabaab away from major cities, and the federal government of Somalia has taken steps towards creating stability. With foreign help, the Somali security forces have grown stronger, and political leaders are aiming to hold nationwide elections in 2020.³ These gains, however, are being undermined by inadequate troop numbers and lack of predictable and sustainable funding to fight Al-Shabaab and a small faction of Islamic State fighters in the north. The five countries that constitute the AMISOM announced that they would withdraw 1,000 of the 22,000 fighters from the Horn of Africa by the end of the year and that all foreign peacekeepers would have withdrawn by the end of 2020. Later they released a communique on Friday 2nd March, saying that countries contributing to troops that fight terrorists in Somalia have agreed not to pull out of the war-ravaged Horn of Africa state as this would "lead to a reversal of the gains made by African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). AMISOM also noted that the Somalia National Army was not yet strong enough to take care of security concerns there. They requested the UN and the European Union to continue supporting operations of AMISOM beyond 2018."⁴

Somalia's president is trying to force Al-Shabaab to negotiate a political settlement with his government, the commander of US forces in Africa said on 6th March. He said Somalis President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, popularly known as Farmajo, is aiming to "beat back Al-Shabaab to the point where defections, especially of leadership, become the order of the day and some negotiated settlement with the federal

¹ (Moraa, 2018)
² (George & Lendon, 2018)

³ (Athumani, 2018)
⁴ (Xinhua, 2018)

government probably takes place.” Most insurgencies end in such a manner, Gen Walhauser noted in an exchange with the US House of Representatives Armed Services Committee.⁵

On 7th March, a roadside bomb struck a car southwest of the Somali capital Mogadishu, killing two government officials and two of their bodyguards. The blast occurred on the main tarmac road linking Mogadishu to southwestern regions, near Afgoye, about 40 Kilometers southwest of the capital. The officials were returning from talks attended by the Southwest regional state President, former Parliament Speaker Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan, senior Somali military officials, and advisers for U.S forces in Somalia. The talks at Baledogle airfield centered on plans to reopen the road linking Mogadishu and the town of Baidoa. Somali officials say the Baledogle airfield is where U.S military experts train Somali forces and help them launch attacks on Al-Shabaab positions. There was no claim of responsibility, although Al-Shabaab has carried out similar attacks on the road, targeting government officials, civilians and forces of the African Union mission in Somalia, AMISOM.⁶

On 8th March, reports emerged on how Al-Shabaab militants in Somalia are extorting huge sums from starving communities. The militants are also forcibly recruiting hundreds of children as soldiers and suicide bombers. This comes as the terror groups endured financial pressure, a decrease in numbers and an apparent crisis of morale. Intelligence documents, transcripts of interrogations from recent defectors, and interviews conducted on returnees by

security agents confirm the situation. “Worse is that they lurk in the village waiting for us to receive any food or medical aid from the AMISOM troops or humanitarian organizations and then they forcibly come for them,” Omar from Gedo region said in an interview. They even confiscate painkillers from mothers who have just delivered. With the current drought in Somalia and the continuing bombardment from the Somalia National Army, AMISOM, and its international partners, it now appears that the militants are not only suffering operational defeat but are also suffering a crisis of morale and financial pressure. This has prompted the drive to squeeze revenue out of poor rural communities. A recent defector from central Somalia told government interrogators that the group forces “Muslims to pay for pretty much everything except entering the mosque.”

In another interview, a former mid-ranking commander, who defected four months ago, described how he oversaw the taxation of every aspect of people lives. For instance, he says wells are taxed at Sh200,000 per month, and a fee of Sh35,000 levied at water holes for every camel drinking there. In Bai province, Southern Somalia residents are forced to pay an annual collective tax of a thousand camels, each worth Sh50,000, and several thousand goats. Also, trucks using roads in Al-Shabaab controlled territory pay Sh180,000 for each trip. Five per cent of all land sales is taken as tax, and arbitrary levies of up to Sh1,000,000 imposed on communities for “educational purposes.”⁷

On the 15th March, Seven Al-Shabaab militants were killed Wednesday by Somali forces in the port city of Kismayo in southern Somalia. Somalia military commander in Kismayo, Mukhtar Abdi told journalists that

⁵ (KELLEY, 2018)

⁶ (Hassan, 2018)

⁷ (STAR REPORTER, 2018)

his forces launched an ambush against the militants following a tip-off in Wirkoy area. “After receiving information that they were planning to launch an attack in Wirkoy area, we moved in fast and killed seven Al-Shabaab fighters,” he said. One soldier was injured in the brief gunfight. Al-Shabaab has not commented on the incident. ⁸

In Somalia, 32 Al-Shabaab militants were killed in fierce fighting with the Somali National Army (SNA). Ahmed Mohamed Teredisho, Somalia Army Commander in Hirran region, told reporters that the fighting took place in Hiiran region after armed Al-Shabaab members tried to impose taxes on villages around Mahas town. SNA soldiers’ efforts were reinforced by help from locals to fight the enemy in the region in a fight that lasted more than six hours. Meanwhile, Al-Shabaab militants have not commented on the military victory claimed by the Somali government officials in the region. Somalia security official said that a roadside bomb had targeted a pickup vehicle carrying members of the security forces on the outskirts of Mogadishu.⁹ On the same day, a senior terrorist militant commander of Al-Shabaab on Sunday surrendered to Somalia National Army in Baidoa town, southwest Somalia. Somalia National Army Commander at 60th Division, Ismail Khalif Shire, told Somali National News Agency that they would welcome anyone that denounces extremist ideology and joins the peace process. The Somali Army Commander said that this militant was in charge of big explosions and training, he operated in Bay, Bakool, Gedo, Lower Jubba and Benadir regions. The group's fighters laying down their arms and coming to

Somali National Army increased in this region in the latest three months now.

On 19th March, the third intelligence and information sharing conference, aimed at forging closer working ties between various intelligence actors in Somalia, opened in the capital Mogadishu. The aim was to explore access to non-traditional information sources, discuss enhancement of intelligence sharing and dissemination, and emerging threats from terror group Al-Shabaab. The Deputy Force Commander of the AU Mission in Somalia, Maj-Gen Charles Tai Gituai, said he was rooting for more effective intelligence sharing modalities among the actors to maximize results. He emphasized that intelligence is fundamentally important to the peace mission, to give decision makers multi-dimensional situational awareness through coordinated analysis of information by different components of a mission. In attendance were AMISOM’s sectors, Somali security forces, and key international security partner. He also stressed that “effective processes and structures,” would ensure information gathered is shared and stored securely, for the benefit of all stakeholders.

The conference was being held with the support of the United Kingdom Mission Support Team (UKMST) and aimed to improve the mechanisms and coordination of information sharing among diverse groups, with emphasis on intelligence sharing, which has been vital in preventing terror attacks in the past. AMISOM’s Chief Military Intelligence Officer Col. Naboth Mwesigwa said the conference would “strengthen intelligence gathering”, while at

⁸ (Bernama Staff, 2018)

⁹ (Isse, 2018)

the same time help in the modification of defenses and offensive capabilities while building confidence and ties with both partners and the federal government of Somalia. ¹⁰

Mogadishu's stabilization security unit forces on Tuesday 19th March, launched an operation targeting the northern parts of the capital, in response to the increasing attacks and killings. Hundreds of people, mostly young men, were detained in Mogadishu's Yaqshid district in connection with the murder of a soldier on duty at a checkpoint near Towfiq Hotel junction and a civilian. Most of the people had been freed later while several suspected to have links with Al-Shabaab were taken into custody for further questioning. Suspected Al-Shabaab assassins armed with pistols were reported to have carried out the shooting and escaped immediately from the crime scene before the arrival of Somali security forces. The police officials say the ongoing security sweeps are aimed at stemming the militant attacks and targeted killings in the seaside capital. Since the formation of the Mogadishu Stabilization Security unit in 2017, the security of the city has been improving gradually as the forces set up checkpoints outside the capital, searching vehicles and people coming in. ¹¹

On 22nd March, at least 14 people were killed, and ten others wounded in a car bomb blast near a hotel in Somalia's capital, Mogadishu. Capt. Mohamed Hussein said the explosion occurred near the Weheliye hotel on the busy Makka Almukarramah road. The road has been a target of attacks in the past by Somalia – based terrorist group Al-Shabaab. Most of the casualties

were passerby and traders. The death toll and wounded people were announced by security ministry spokesman Abdulaziz Hildhiban. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the blast. The group frequently attacks Mogadishu's high-profile areas such as hotels and military checkpoints. A truck bombing in October killed 512 people in the country's deadliest ever attack. Only a few attacks since 9/11 have killed more. Al-Shabaab was blamed. The horn of Africa nation continues to struggle to counter the terrorist group. Concerns have been high over plans to hand over the country's security to Somalia's forces as 21,000 strong African Union force begins a withdrawal that is expected to be complete in 2020. ¹²

On 25th March, a suicide bomber blew himself up at a checkpoint near Somalia parliament and interior ministry in the capital Mogadishu on Sunday, and the city's ambulance service said three people had been killed. Nur Mohamed, a Mogadishu police officer, told Reuters the bomb went off at the heavily guarded Sayidka checkpoint. Abdikadir Abdirahman, director of Amin ambulances, said that three people had been killed excluding the bomber and one injured. There was no immediate claim of responsibility although Al-Shabab militant group frequently carries out bombings and other attacks in Mogadishu in a campaign to topple Somalia's Western-backed federal government. ¹³

On 27th March, at least three people were reported to have been killed and four others wounded in heavy clashes between Somali government forces and Al-Shabaab militants

¹⁰ (AMISOM NEWS, 2018)

¹¹ (Staff reporter, 2018)

¹² (Guled, 2018)

¹³ (Staff, 2018)

in Southern Somalia. The fighting broke out on the outskirts of Goofgaduud village, located about 35Km north of Baidoa city after Somali troops backed by Ethiopian soldiers attacked al Shabab customs base. The warring sides exchanged heavy and small weaponry during the combat that left three people from both sides and wounded four others.¹⁴

Somali militant group Al-Shabaab spoke on the current border dispute in Gedo region's town of Beled Hawo and Kenya, Radio Dalsan reports. In audio released by the militant's group's official radio al Shabab Spokesman, Ali Dheere Abu Musab said it would send its fighters to be part of the border defense. Dheere termed the current construction of a wall on the border near Mandera and BeledHawo town as an incursion of Somalia's land. Al-Shabaab praised the residents of the border town for protesting against the said incursion.¹⁵

In Bobaso town Somalia, Somali's semi-autonomous state Puntland forces arrested tens of people on suspicion of al Shabab militants in a security operation. The operation was conducted in villages of Bosaso town, the commercial hub of the region, following an assassination of a military officer, whose name identified as Shine in the town. Hamza Hussein, a policeman, said that the crackdown saw the arrest of people who were suspected to have links with al Shabab. The murder of the military officer was claimed by Al Qaeda linked group al Shabab based in Somalia.¹⁶ The International Committee of the Red Cross said that one of its staff members died

after a car bombing in Somalia capital. Yusuf Ibrahim, a Somali national, died on Wednesday night of his injuries after the attack in Mogadishu. Somali police said two others were wounded after the bomb attached to their vehicle exploded near the ICRC office. The Somali based extremist group al Shabab which is linked to al Qaeda, claimed responsibility. The group often targets high-profile areas of the capital.¹⁷

KENYA

In Nairobi majority leader of the County assembly, Abdi Guyo denied reports that he had been funding criminal activities including terrorism, in the city. He also rejected claims he had been engaging in sexual affairs with female Nominated MCAs. "I abhor Al-Shabaab and its activities. I am not their sympathizer and I don't know who runs the terror group," he said in an interview with the star, a Kenyan newspaper. He accused cartels of holding the county at ransom and being behind the 'false and alarming' reports about him. Guyo claimed the cartels want to silence him because of his stance against corruption. In his contribution to the assembly on 28th February, he said, "I have never been involved in any criminal activity, Madam Speaker [Beatrice Elachi. I am a leader in this house, in my ward and in whole of Nairobi. What is happening is pure intimidation and character assassination."¹⁸

On 2nd March 2018, four police officers and a reservist were killed, and three others reportedly injured after Al-Shabaab attack in Fino area, Mandera. In a confrontation that lasted close to three hours, more than

¹⁴ (Somalia: Three Killed, 4 Injured in Heavy Battle in Southern Somalia, 27)

¹⁵ (Salad, We Will Send Our Fighters To Defend Beled Hawo Alshabaab Says On Border Dispute, 2018)

¹⁶ (Snow, 2018)

¹⁷ (Associated press, 2018)

¹⁸ (OTIENO, 2018)

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50 heavily armed militants attacked the campus at the border town of Fino, Lafey sub-county before retreating to Somalia just five Kilometers away. They also hurled a hand grenade at a Safaricom mast to cripple communication in the area. The regional commissioner Mohamud Saleh reported that the terrorists were revenging recent killings of 40 militants by KDF in Fafadul area, Gedo region in Somalia. Kenya Defense Forces have been in Somalia since October 2011, to combat the Al-Shabaab extremist group. A multi-agency security team later identified Jamaa Nuh Abdille as the mastermind of the twin terrorist attack at Fino, Mandera county.¹⁹

On 10th March, the United States listed two Kenyan Al-Shabaab leaders, Ahmad Ali and Abdifatah Abdi, as global terrorists. The two were listed on United Nations Security Council subsidiary organs website on March 8th. Ali, who is said to be the director of the group's Kenyan branch, is said to have been in Kenya since 2012. He directs the groups Kenyan branch operations and routinely targets Kenyan AMISOM troops in Somalia. The State Department cited the January 2016 attack on Kenyan AMISOM troops in El Adde, Somalia which left about 100 KDF soldiers dead, and an unknown number missing. Some were kidnapped and held hostage by the attackers. According to the UN, Ali is also responsible for the Al-Shabaab propaganda targeting the Kenyan government and civilians. He is also credited for the July 2017 video in which he issues threats to Muslims serving in Kenya's security forces. The report also says that he has at times worked as an Al-Shabaab recruiter, focusing on poor youth in slums

as well as Al-Shabaab fundraiser who utilizes mosques to secure resources. Reportedly, his overall goal is to destabilize Kenya by threatening, planning and executing attacks, and encouraging young Muslims to participate in fighting against Kenyan security forces.

His counterpart Abdi, on the other hand, was listed and put on the Kenyan government's wanted list of terrorists known or suspected to be members of Al-Shabaab in 2015. The police reported that Abdi recruited members who provided support to Al-Shabaab and engaged in acts that threaten peace, security or stability of Somalia. Although based in Somalia, he is known to focus on operations outside the country like assistance in crossing the border for Al-Shabaab recruits crossing from Kenya in Somalia. He is also wanted in connection with the June 2014 attack in Mpeketoni, Kenya that claimed numerous lives and was believed to be planning further attacks.²⁰

On 16th March, a court ruled that Kenyan police can continue detaining five people who allegedly planned to attack a Nairobi courthouse so a Muslim cleric facing terror charges could escape. Police accused the suspects and cleric of being members of the Al-Qaeda-linked Al-Shabaab militant group from Somalia that has vowed vengeance on Kenya for sending troops into Somalia to fight the militants. The Anti-Terrorism Police Unit said the suspects plotted to attack the Milimani Law courts building in the capital on Feb 16, when Sheikh Guyo Gorsa was expected to appear on terrorism related charges. The court ruled that the five

¹⁹ (ASTARIKO, 2018)

²⁰ (Agutu, 2018)

suspects could be held for another 30 days. The suspects had been arrested in mid-February after officers spotted a vehicle loaded with explosives and weapons hidden in a thicket in Isiolo County. The report says officers were shot at when they approached the vehicle and they returned fire, killing one suspect. The other two were arrested at the scene, and authorities say the vehicle was found to be rigged as a bomb with 176 pounds of TNT. Police also removed five rifles, 36 loaded magazines, 36 unprimed hand grenades and 18 improvised bombs.²¹

The Kenya Teachers Service Commission (TSC) had transferred over 329 teachers by 16th March, to different schools since 16th February this year when suspected Al-Shabaab militants attacked Qarsa primary school. The transfer of others from 42 different secondary schools in Wajir County is underway following a meeting between boards of management of the 42 schools, principals, and government education officials. TSC Wajir County Director Mohamed Yusuf who confirmed the relocation said the teacher's employer had decided after the attacks against its non-local employees increased in recent months.²²

On 17th March, Lamu county commissioner Joseph Kanyiri said that Al-Shabaab returnees would not be arrested but given amnesty. He said that there had been an influx of Kenyan returnees from Somali who have taken refuge in Boni forest with a target to challenge Kenyan forces on 'Operation Linda Boni.' On this note, he added that the country's security should not be compromised and those with such ill

intentions must stop immediately because they will never succeed. This was during a stakeholders meeting dubbed 'IOM Kenya Program for Human Security and standardization (PHSS), Countering and Preventing Violent Extremism P/CVE, held on Friday 16th, in Lamu town. It engaged the Republic of Kenya, Embassy of the United States of America and the government of Japan, local Community-Based organizations and human rights groups within the area to combat terrorism and violent extremism in Kenya.²³

On 18th March, a Kenyan terror suspect who had been on the Kenyan police surveillance fled to Yemen to Join international terrorist group ISIS. Police said they established that Mohamed Shukri Abdiwahid Yarrow had arrived in Yemen two week earlier and was welcomed by his friends. Shukri, a resident in Malindi, was born on February 25, 1989, in Mandera East and had schooled in Gilgil Hills Academy and Sunshine secondary school between 2005 and 2008. He then went to study medicine at Saratov Medical University in Russia from 2009 to 2015 and was employed as a medical intern at Malindi sub-county hospital for one year from April 2016. He had been arrested earlier by Anti-Terror police in Malindi on August 28, 2016, following investigations into an ISIS cell linked to Ali Mohamed Abdi aka Abu Fidaa operating in Malindi but was released for lack of sufficient evidence. It is believed that he left the country through Somalia before possibly heading to Yemen.

He is said to have inherited the leadership of the ISIS cell in Kenya from Abu Fidaa and was coordinating recruitment of Kenyan

²¹ (AP News, 2018)

²² (Salad, 2018)

²³ (Itava, 2018)

Youth especially doctors. He is believed to have orchestrated several departures by Kenyan youth, mainly university graduates, who left to Join ISIS in Syria. Mohamed Abdi Ali aka Abu Fidaa was a medical intern at the Wote Hospital. He was arrested on April 29, 2016, on suspicion that he was a member of a terrorist cell of the Islamic State terror group involved in radicalization and recruitment of University students as well as large-scale planning of attacks including a biological attack in Kenya using anthrax. ²⁴

On 19th March, Police detained two men believed to be Al-Shabaab recruiters who were trying to sneak out of the county to join Al-Shabaab in Somalia. The two Kenyans Suleiman Hemed Mwandilo and Salama Salim Mahamed were apprehended in Takaba, Mandera on Wednesday, March 14 by Security officers while seeking to travel to Somalia. Police say the two individuals are key Al-Shabaab facilitators and recruiters who were attempting to cross over to Somalia and continue with their recruitment and facilitation of terror activities. They include 37 years old Salama Salim Mohamed who is a Digo fisherman from Maweni in Mombasa while Suleiman Hemedi Mwandilo, 39, is a resident of Bagani within Likoni, Mombasa. Security officers intercepted the two at a roadblock in Takaba as they were planning to cross over to Somalia through the El-Wak- Boroache route. According to police, the two were also engaged in drug peddling and other petty crimes in Likoni, Mombasa and were being monitored by security agencies for sometimes before their arrests. A police report also shows that the two were part of

Ramadhan Hamisi Kufunguwa's network. Ramadhan is a Kenyan fighter and a middle-level commander within Al-Shabaab ranks and file in Somalia.²⁵ Kufungwa traveled to Somalia in 2011 after attending religious studies at Ijtihad Madrassa and Maganyakulo Madrasatul Tawheed Islaamiya in Kwale County. He returned home to become a fanatical adherent and follower of the late Muslim clerics Aboud Rogo and Abubakar Shariff aka Makaburi. He is also reported to have gone back to Somalia where he leads a recruitment cell on the South Coast and Tanzania. ²⁶

The Kenya police revealed the Nairobi spots targeted by a terror group which intended to launch a bomb attack in the capital. According to the police, the suspects proposed to start with the supreme court which was to be the epicenter of the bomb attack. That would have been followed by successive explosions at the Kenyatta International Convention center, Parliament Buildings, County Hall, Technical University of Kenya, Central Bus Station, Jeevanjee Gardens, Serena Hotel, The University of Nairobi and Milimani Law Courts. According to the documents profiling the suspects, it was also disclosed that one Adbimajit Hassan Adan worked closely with Anthony Kitila Makau, Mohamed Osman Nane, John Kiarie, and Lydia Nyawira Mburu. Adbimajit was arrested in Isiolo driving a vehicle laden with a total of 110 kgs of Trinitrotoluene explosives, five AK-47 rifles, 36-gun magazines, three modified Nokia phones, 36 unprimed hand grenades, 18 pairs of grenade primers, five military grade projectiles, and three military knives. The

²⁴ (Ombati, 2018)

²⁵ (Ombati, Two Mombasa men arrested headed to Somalia to join Al-Shabaab, 2018)

²⁶ (ONSARIGO, 2018)

document further noted that Abdimajit traveled to Somalia to join Al-Shabab in early 2015 where he underwent training in various camps and carried out some assignments in Somalia and Kenya.²⁷

On 27th March, Lamu county boss Muchangi Kioi accused Boni residents of supplying food and water to al Shabab militants hiding in the forest. He said that some of the people were using proceeds from illegal logging and charcoal burning to fund the terror group. He later noted that police were conducting a massive crackdown on the loggers and charcoal burners. At least 250 bags of charcoal and tonnes of timber were discovered on the first day of the operation at Ziwa la Kengo, Ziwa la Taa and Maisha Masha areas.²⁸

On 29th March, the national government established security camps in all terror hotspot areas along the Lamu-Garsen route. Lamu county police commander Muchangi Kioi said camps had been established in Milihoi, Nyongoro and Lango la Simba. Mr. Kioi urged members of the public to adhere to orders issued by security agencies manning the road, including the requirement for travelers to alight from vehicles and be frisked at roadblocks. He urged residents to travel in convoys with a police escort. He also added that the ban on night travel on the Lamu-Garsen road had not been lifted. The Lamu security department led had cleared bushes at Nyongoro and Lango la Simba areas to make the road visible on both sides which was aimed at preventing attacks.²⁹

On March 30th, Mandera Governor Ali Roba and his counterpart Mohamed A. Mohamed revealed that the much-publicized security fence on the Kenya- Somalia border was temporarily stopped to allow further negotiations between the two states. While on a meet -the-people tour in the border towns of Mandera and Bulahawa, they said the two countries have agreed to temporarily stop the project that would separate the two towns. According to the two presidents Uhuru Kenyatta and Somali president Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo will soon meet to agree on a few “thorny issues” before the project proceeds. Governor Roba said the decision was reached to quell the rising tension among people who live near the border.³⁰

ETHIOPIA

On 11th March, Ethiopian soldiers killed nine civilians and injured 12 after mistaking them for rebels near a town along the country’s border with Kenya. The soldiers had been deployed to the Moyale areas of the country’s Oromiya region in pursuit of Oromo Liberation Front fighters who had crossed into Ethiopia from three locations. The go-ahead was reportedly given with faulty intelligence and several soldiers in the group that led the attack had been suspended, leading to high-level military delegation to launch an inquiry. The incident took place at a time when outbreaks of violence have continued to plague the country, mostly in Oromiya. On February 16th, the nation’s capital Addis Ababa imposed a six-month, nationwide state of

²⁷ (Keya, 2018)

²⁸ (PRAXIDES, 2018)

²⁹ (KAZUNGU, 2018)

³⁰ (OTSIALO, 2018)

emergency to tamp down unrest in the country.³¹

On 14th March, more than 8,000 Ethiopian refugees, arrived in Moyale town, Marsabit county, after being flushed out of their homes by soldiers. They fled the country in the wake of their government's crackdown on dissidents, with Ethiopian government having killed at least 13 people the previous week. The refugees accused the Ethiopian government of abdicating its responsibility of protecting its citizens. The camps where the 8,200 Ethiopians are staying in Moyale are at Butiye Social Hall, Somare, an NGO camp at Moyale, a plot owned by Marsabit Governor Mahmoud Mohamed and Dambala Fachana Village. One of the refugees, Ms. Abdia Galma, a 56-year-old mother of 11, said that the conflict had been due to land allocated to some members of one community and that the conflict had been building up over the past several years. The Kenya Red Cross appealed to humanitarian and security agencies to set up a proper camp for the refugees as there was no designated area for the consolidation of the numbers and their registration.³²

CONCLUSION

In March, there were 67 casualties, 28 civilians, three militants, four police officers and two government officials' dead with their two bodyguards and 28 injuries. The surge in the number of civilians that died as compared to the last month was due to Ethiopian soldiers who killed nine civilians by mistake while in pursuit of rebels at the Kenyan Ethiopian border. The humanitarian situation in the border town of Kenya, where over 8,000 people have fled to Kenya, and another 39,000 displaced.

Al-Shabaab attacks claimed 24 lives. Responsibility for most of the attacks was claimed by the extremist group while some were reportedly carried out by them as they had made similar attacks in the past. Efforts by Governments in the region and abroad are ongoing with information sharing conferences and discussions on the way forward being collaborative.

On 15th March, local media in Ethiopia reported that the Command post administering the February 16th state of emergency arrested Taye Dendea, of the Oromia regional state for openly criticizing the deadly military incident in the town of Moyale over the weekend on 11th March 2018. He is a lawyer and head of the Oromia regional state's justice bureau and serves as the bureau's communication and PR department. In an interview with the VOA Amharic service, Dendea said he believed that the deadly incident was a deliberate act by the security forces and urged action to be taken against all persons directly and remotely connected to the incident. He is among other Oromia state officials who have been arrested such as the deputy police commissioner of the state, chief administrator of East Hararghe and Mayor of the town of Nekemt, as it is illegal to criticize the SOE under the rules of the command post. The Moyale incident has led to a humanitarian situation in the border town with Kenya, where over 8,000 people have fled to Kenya, and another 39,000 displaced.³³

³¹ (Reuters Staff, 2018)
³² (GITONGA MARETE, 2018)

³³ (Shaban, 2018)