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Country Reports on Terrorism 2011 - Somalia

Overview: In 2011, with the assistance of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and Somalia's neighbors, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) made significant gains in degrading al-Shabaab capability and liberating areas from al-Shabaab administration. However, foreign fighters and al-Shabaab members remained in many parts of south and central Somalia and continued to mount operations within Somalia and against neighboring countries.

A multi-front offensive commencing in February by the TFG, AMISOM, and TFG-allied forces against al-Shabaab resulted in significant territorial gains in the capital city of Mogadishu and key cities of southern and central Somalia. Ethiopia, Kenya, and associated Somali forces liberated areas from al-Shabaab control in the Gedo, Lower Juba, and Hiraa regions of Somalia. In August, al-Shabaab withdrew from many Mogadishu districts, leaving the TFG and AMISOM in control of the majority of districts in Somalia's capital for the first time since the Ethiopians left in 2009. By the end of 2011, the TFG and its allies were poised to make further territorial advances against al-Shabaab in southern and central Somalia.

Al-Shabaab remained in control of much of southern and central Somalia, however, providing a permissive environment for al-Qa'ida operatives to conduct training and terrorist planning with other sympathetic violent extremists, including foreign fighters. The capability of the TFG and other Somali local and regional authorities to prevent and preempt al-Shabaab terrorist attacks remained limited.

Al-Shabaab's withdrawal from conventional fighting in and near Mogadishu resulted in a change of al-Shabaab tactics to asymmetrical attacks against AMISOM and the TFG.

These attacks resulted in the increased use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) that became more advanced. In late 2011, al-Shabaab with increasing frequency employed IEDs against Kenyan and anti-al-Shabaab Somali forces in South/Central Somalia.

A severe drought across the Horn of Africa led to a July UN famine declaration for six regions in southern and central Somalia, affecting four million Somalis out of the estimated population of seven million. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs subsequently declared that 750,000 people were at immediate risk of starvation because, in part, al-Shabaab had prohibited the delivery of assistance. A significant number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) sought assistance in Mogadishu. Other IDPs found themselves unable to access their homes in al-Shabaab controlled areas of southern and central Somalia although numerous others sought refuge in neighboring Kenya and Ethiopia.

2011 Terrorist Incidents: Al-Shabaab leaders maintained a number of training camps in southern Somalia for young national and international al-Shabaab recruits. In these camps, AQ-affiliated foreign fighters often lead the training and indoctrination of the recruits. For further information on al-Shabaab, please see Chapter 6, *Foreign Terrorist Organizations*.

In 2011, al-Shabaab and other violent extremists conducted suicide attacks, remote-controlled roadside bombings, kidnappings, and assassinations of government officials, journalists, humanitarian workers, and civil society leaders throughout Somalia. Al-Shabaab also threatened UN and other foreign aid agencies and their staff. Two examples of high-profile al-Shabaab terrorist attacks included a truck bomb that detonated in Mogadishu on October 4, killing over seventy, including many students waiting outside the Ministry of Education, and the December 5 assassination of a prominent Islamist scholar, Ahmed Hadji Abdirahman, in Bossaso, Puntland.

In addition to high-profile attacks, al-Shabaab routinely terrorized local populations into compliance with al-Shabaab edicts. There were frequent reports of al-Shabaab carrying out amputation of limbs for minor thievery offenses, stoning for suspected adultery, and forced conscription of child soldiers. Al-Shabaab leaders frequently ordered beheaded corpses to be left in streets as an object lesson to local communities. Al-Shabaab bombings targeted secondary schools admitting female students. Al-Shabaab forces also engaged in widespread rape and violence against women.

In Mogadishu before August 6, al-Shabaab conducted almost daily attacks against the TFG and AMISOM. On June 10, the TFG Minister of Interior was killed at his residence when an al-Shabaab-affiliated family member detonated a suicide vest. After withdrawing from Mogadishu on August 6, al-Shabaab increased the use of asymmetric

attacks in Mogadishu. In the last week of August, Shabaab beheaded 12 youths suspected of being spies in the Huriwaa and Dayniile districts of Mogadishu. Near-daily IEDs, grenade attacks, and assassinations targeting TFG security forces and AMISOM also led to the deaths of hundreds of civilians.

On August 4, Somali TFG President Sheikh Sharif declared in a letter to the UN, "The main cause of the famine has been al-Shabaab, who has denied the Somali people the stability necessary to be self-sufficient in terms of food security." TFG leaders noted that they were compiling evidence of crimes against humanity by al-Shabaab leaders, including denial of passage for humanitarian assistance to starving populations. NGOs and media reported that al-Shabaab had engaged in forced re-settlement of IDPs, sometimes for the purpose of cultivating cash crops that could be used to buy weapons. On November 28, al-Shabaab imposed an indefinite ban on 16 humanitarian organizations working in al-Shabaab controlled territory, reducing access to humanitarian relief for communities in those areas.

Legalization and Law Enforcement: The TFG and regional administrations continued to pursue al-Shabaab suspects throughout the year. On June 10 in Mogadishu, TFG personnel killed AQ senior leader and al-Shabaab trainer Fazul Abdullah Mohammed, aka Harun Fazul, when he attempted to breach a checkpoint. Harun Fazul was one of several AQ leaders federally indicted for carrying out the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

The TFG also requested governments to assist in the enforcement of a long-standing national ban on charcoal exports which are used to finance al-Shabaab activities. On May 3, the TFG passed an anti-terrorism law, and in July, Puntland followed with similar legislation establishing special courts to try terrorism suspects. Somaliland has not passed any such laws.

Somalia received leadership and management training for senior law enforcement officials from Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG), as well as from Somaliland and Puntland, through the Department of State's Antiterrorism Assistance program.

Countering Terrorist Finance: Terrorist financing in Somalia is directly related to the terrorist organization al-Shabaab. Existing laws in Somalia – anti-money laundering (AML) and counterterrorism finance (CTF) – were unenforceable, given the limited area of control of the government and its lack of capacity. Somaliland authorities cited the main obstacle to fighting terrorism, including terrorist financing, as a lack of legal framework. Somalia does not have a formal banking sector and although there are a couple entities that provide financial banking services throughout Somalia, they operate in an

unregulated environment. *Hawala* (money transmittal firms) that transfer funds into Somalia from abroad must comply with regulations in the foreign countries from which the transfers originate and therefore do have a degree of transparency and oversight.

Al-Shabaab derived its funding in part through taxation of businesses and private citizens, customs and other revenue from Kismayo port, and financial donations from Somali and non-Somali sympathizers both inside Somalia and abroad. Somalia has one of the longest land borders as well as the longest coastline in Africa. The TFG, and the regional Puntland and Somaliland administrations, have limited control over their borders and many goods flow into and out of Somalia with no government knowledge. In areas controlled by al-Shabaab, the terrorist group may "tax" goods' movements, including some humanitarian shipments. The TFG has called on regional governments to help stem the flow of terrorist financing, requesting local governments trace, freeze, and seize al-Shabaab financing.

The TFG did not have an independent system or mechanism for freezing terrorist assets. The government lacked capacity and no government entities were charged with or capable of tracking, seizing, or freezing illegal assets. There was no mechanism for distributing information from the government to financial institutions (principally *hawala*), and the central government enforced no suspicious transaction or large currency transaction reporting requirements on banks or other financial institutions. However, many institutions operating in Somalia had international offices, and therefore adhered to minimum international standards, including freezes on terrorist entities' finances. Money remittance companies, for example, almost all use electronic anti-money laundering systems which flagged names listed on the UN 1267 Sanctions Committee's consolidated list. Somalia is a signatory to the 2001 UN International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. Somalia is not a member of any Financial Action Task Force-style regional bodies and does not have any mechanisms in place under which to share information related to terrorist financing with the United States or with other developed countries.

For further information on money laundering and financial crimes, we refer you to the *2011 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), Volume 2, Money Laundering and Financial Crimes*: <http://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/nrcrpt/index.htm>.

Regional and International Cooperation: The TFG's efforts have focused on trying to build and maintain support within Somalia rather than bolstering external cooperation. However, the TFG is a member of the African Union, Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the League of Arab States, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. The TFG also works closely with AMISOM. The TFG worked with international and

regional partners, including Kenya and Ethiopia, to degrade and eliminate al-Shabaab. The TFG and regional governments cooperated fully with U.S. law enforcement on numerous occasions.

Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism: The TFG has become more adept at proactively countering al-Shabaab's violent extremist messaging. This was demonstrated through programs on Radio Mogadishu and the state-owned television station, as well as through press releases. For example, within hours of the October 4 bombing of government buildings that killed over 70 people, the TFG released a press statement condemning the attack. The TFG's Ministry of Information continued the Islamic Lecture Series, a one-hour call-in radio program begun in 2010, designed to undercut al-Shabaab's efforts to acquire religious legitimacy for its violent extremist ideology. Respected clerics and sheikhs from Mogadishu presented original lectures on a particular subject – for example, suicide bombing – and discussed how the issue is viewed within Islam. The scripts were read out live on Sundays and rebroadcast on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Following each broadcast, listeners called in and debated the topic with the presenting cleric or sheikh. Members of al-Shabaab have responded to the messages from the show and have attempted to debate them. The messaging is overwhelmingly critical of al-Shabaab, and there was an emerging narrative that al-Shabaab was neither authentically Islamic nor Somali in its actions and objectives.