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Country Report on Terrorism 2014 - Chapter 2 - Somalia

Overview: In 2014, Somalia made significant progress in its counterterrorism efforts. The terrorist group al-Shabaab lost control of large sections of rural areas in south-central Somalia, including the key port city of Barawe and other key towns along the main supply route in the Juba, Shabelle, Bay, and Bakol regions as a result of the successful AMISOM-led Operation Indian Ocean. In October, the Puntland Security Forces led an offensive against the al-Shabaab stronghold in northern Somalia's Golis Mountains, which further degraded al-Shabaab's operational capability. Separate U.S. military strikes that killed then-leader Mokhtar Abu Zubeyr, also known as Ahmed Abdi "Godane," and Tahlil, the head of intelligence and security, left al-Shabaab in a leadership crisis. Nevertheless, al-Shabaab continued to conduct a broad spectrum of asymmetrical attacks throughout Somalia. These attacks included harder targets in Mogadishu, such as the Mogadishu International Airport, Villa Somalia Presidential Compound, and the Parliament, as well as an increasingly greater number of assassinations of government and security officials. The ability of the federal, local, and regional authorities to prevent and preempt al-Shabaab terrorist attacks remained limited. Somalia remained a safe haven for a number of international terrorists, who continued to plan and mount operations within Somalia and in neighboring countries, particularly in Kenya.

Minister for Foreign Affairs Abdirahman Beileh represented Somalia at the first ministerial-level plenary for the Global Coalition to Counter the Islamic state in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Brussels on December 3, 2014, where he reaffirmed Somalia's commitment to work together under a common, multi-faceted, and long-term strategy to degrade and defeat ISIL.

2014 Terrorist Incidents: In 2014, al-Shabaab conducted suicide attacks, remote-controlled roadside bombings, and assassinations of government, security officials, and civil society leaders throughout Somalia. Al-Shabaab executed attacks in Mogadishu in a targeted campaign against Somali security forces and other government officials, and targeted government and foreign structures, convoys, and popular gathering places for government officials, the Somali diaspora, and foreigners. Notable incidents in 2014 included:

- On January 1, al-Shabaab targeted the Jazeera hotel in Mogadishu using suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (SVBIED) in a staggered assault. After the first SVBIED detonated at the hotel frequented by Somali government officials and foreigners, a second VBIED exploded shortly after first responders arrived at the scene to tend to the injured. According to Somali officials, at least 20 people were killed and another 30 were wounded.
- On February 13, an al-Shabaab SVBIED hit a UN convoy outside the main gate of Mogadishu International Airport. The attack killed multiple bystanders but no UN employees, according to National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) officials.
- On February 21, al-Shabaab militants launched a complex attack against the Presidential Compound, known as Villa Somalia, using a Vehicle-Born Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) and a team of attackers, some

armed with AK-47s and suicide vests. All militants were killed and at least five security officials died, according to the Office of the President.

- On May 24, al-Shabaab militants launched a complex attack against the Somali Parliament compound in Mogadishu using a suicide driver with a VBIED and a team of about seven attackers armed with AK-47s. Two members of Parliament reportedly sustained injuries when the militants detonated the VBIED at the main gate. Security forces reportedly killed all the militants during the attack. Casualties included around 12 security officials from AMISOM, NISA, the Somali National Army (SNA), and Somali National Police (SNP). In addition, some 24 security officials and civilians sustained injuries according to NISA officials.
- On August 4, al-Shabaab used suicide vests to attack and kill the Bosasso City Police Commissioner and about three bystanders in Bosasso City, Puntland, according to Puntland Security Services.
- On August 31, al-Shabaab militants attacked the NISA Godka Jilicow Detention Facility in central Mogadishu. The attackers reportedly employed a VBIED at the front gate of the facility followed by a ground assault using small weapons and grenades. NISA officers reportedly killed all the attackers, preventing them from breaching the interior of the facility.
- On October 12, al-Shabaab launched VBIED attacks against a cafe and restaurant frequented by Somali government officials in Mogadishu. According to a senior police official, a VBIED detonated at the Aroma Café may have been triggered by remote control, killing 11 people and wounding eight others.
- On October 15, attackers killed up to five people and injured several others at the Panorama Restaurant near the Somali National Theater using a VBIED.
- On November 8, al-Shabaab fighters attacked Interim Juba Administration (IJA) Security Forces (IJASF) at Koday, Lower Juba Region. Al-Shabaab militants retook control of Koday, which had fallen to pro-government forces during AMISOM operations October 25 to 27, inflicting heavy casualties, according to IJA officials.
- On November 16, al-Shabaab targeted Villa Somalia with mortar shells, resulting in no reported casualties or damage.
- On December 3, an al-Shabaab suicide bomber detonated a VBIED within 200 meters of the main gate of the Mogadishu International Airport, according to NISA officials.
- On December 25, al-Shabaab operatives launched an attack using small weapons and Improvised Explosive Devices inside the Mogadishu International Airport compound, killing up to eight AMISOM soldiers and an American citizen contractor, a Ugandan citizen contractor, and a Kenyan citizen contractor, according to NISA officials. This attack involved the first one inside the airport compound since September 2009.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: The Federal Government of Somalia continued its efforts to improve security in Mogadishu. Somalia lacks counterterrorism laws, and possesses limited investigative and enforcement capacity to prosecute terrorists, terrorism financiers, and supporters effectively. Somalia currently follows an outdated penal code, last updated in 1963. Ministries responsible for drafting and submitting legislation to Parliament lack the capacity to draft comprehensive counterterrorism laws. Due to lack of civil judiciary capacity, the Somali government tried all terrorism cases in the military court system. Puntland also lacked regional counterterrorism legislation and tried all terrorism cases using its state military court. On March 21, the Puntland military court convicted 36 people accused of links to al-Shabaab. The court sentenced several individuals to life imprisonment, while others received the death penalty. On April 30, Puntland executed 13 al-Shabaab members and supporters whom the court convicted in March.

Somali law enforcement needs significant training assistance for basic investigation skills, cordon and search operations, and effective coordination with the judiciary. Through participation in the Department of State's Antiterrorism Assistance program, the Somali National Police (SNP) received training and equipment to help build professional capacity to respond to critical incidents and coordinate with national and international law enforcement partners. Somalia lacked the capacity, transparency, and technical expertise to operate an effective judicial and law enforcement system, which, in turn, hinders the ability of the government to develop rule of law, prosecute criminals, and provide justice to the Somali population. NISA is the lead counterterrorism organization providing rapid-reaction response forces to respond to terrorist attacks in Mogadishu. Interagency cooperation and information sharing remained weak, and almost all Somali law enforcement actions against terrorists and terrorist groups were reactive in nature.

Somalia has porous borders. Most countries do not recognize Somali identity documents, leaving Somalia with little to no travel document security. Somalia currently does not have a central or shared terrorist screening watchlist, nor does it have biographic and biometric screening capabilities at ports of entry. Minimal cooperation occurred between the federal and regional governments to investigate suspected terrorists, kidnappings, and other incidents of terrorism committed inside and outside of Somalia. The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) sent an investigative team to Mogadishu following the December 25 al-Shabaab attack inside the Mogadishu International Airport. FBI investigators continued to work with a team of AMISOM and NISA investigators, providing technical expertise and investigative assistance related to the attack.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: In 2014, Somalia applied to become an observer to the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENAFATF), a Financial Action Task Force-style regional body, with the

country officially becoming an observer of the MENAFATF in late December 2014. No laws criminalize terrorist financing. During the year, the Central Bank drafted a comprehensive anti-money laundering/counterterrorist finance (AML/CFT) law with the help of the World Bank. At year's end, the Central Bank sought assistance to translate the law to send to Parliament.

In 2014, government entities lacked the capacity to track, seize, or freeze illegal assets. The Somali *hawalas*, most of which operated abroad, employed self-imposed, minimum, international standards to continue operating in countries with comprehensive AML/CFT laws. In May, Merchant's Bank, the largest U.S. bank servicing the Somali remittance sector, announced that it would close all Somalia-based accounts. In August, however, after a careful review of Dahabshiil (the largest money transfer operator in Somalia), Merchant's Bank announced that it would resume services to Somali money transfer operators.

Somalia does not have a commercial banking sector, and the Central Bank lacks the capacity to supervise or regulate the *hawala* (money service businesses) sector. Somalia does not have laws or procedures requiring the collection of data for money transfers or suspicious transaction reports. The supervisory and examining section of the Somali Central Bank attempted to develop procedures to oversee the policies governing the establishment of commercial banks in the country. The section suffered from limited staffing and lacked additional funding to pay the salaries of its staff.

For further information on money laundering and financial crimes, see the *2014 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: Somalia is a member of the AU, Intergovernmental Authority on Development, League of Arab States, and Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the Partnership for Regional East Africa Counterterrorism. The Somali government expressed greater interest in increasing intelligence sharing and conducting joint operations against al-Shabaab with its Horn of Africa neighbors.

Countering Radicalization to Violence and Violent Extremism: The Somali government continued to build its capacity to deliver public messaging, to include Radio Mogadishu and state-owned television stations, which countered al-Shabaab's messaging. The government continued to air the Islamic Lecture Series (ILS) on radio stations in the Somali cities of Beledweyne, Dhusamared, and Abudwaq. The ILS employs an hour-long, call-in radio talk show format designed to undercut al-Shabaab's efforts to acquire religious support for its violent extremist ideology. The Minister of Information strongly advocated for forward-leaning strategies to inform the Somali people of al-Shabaab's violent extremist messages and ideology.