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Country Report on Terrorism 2018 - Chapter 4 - Terrorist Safe Havens - Somalia

In 2018, terrorists used under-governed areas throughout Somalia as safe havens to plan, conduct, and facilitate operations within Somalia and in neighboring countries, mainly in Kenya. The Federal Government of Somalia’s Comprehensive Approach to Security partnership with the international community includes military, law enforcement, and CVE-specific “strands” to address Somalia’s security challenges at the federal, state (Federal Member State), and local levels. Somali law enforcement took several actions in 2018 in Mogadishu and other major cities that disrupted plots and led to prosecutions and convictions.

In 2018, terrorists used under-governed areas throughout Somalia as safe havens to plan, conduct, and facilitate terrorist operations, including mass-casualty bombings in major urban areas. Somali officials failed to implement vital national security reforms and pass legislation that could help enhance the government’s capacity to secure and govern effectively at all levels. Despite these critical gaps in its counterterrorism strategy, the Somali government remained a committed partner and vocal advocate for U.S. counterterrorism efforts.

Al-Shabaab retained much of its safe haven in Somalia, although it faced increased pressure from counterterrorism operations. With the notable exception of targeted operations carried out by U.S.-trained and -equipped units of Somali military forces, the Somali National Army as a whole remained incapable of independently securing and retaking towns from al-Shabaab. This critical gap allowed al-Shabaab to continue to extort local populations and forcibly recruit fighters, some of whom were children.

As seen in previous years, al-Shabaab kept much of its safe haven in the Jubba River Valley as a primary base of operations for plotting and launching attacks throughout Somalia and Kenya. The group retained control of several towns throughout the Jubaland region, including Jilib and Kunyo Barow, and maintained operations in the Gedo region to exploit the porous Kenya-Somalia border and attack targets in Kenya. The Kenyan government maintains a strong presence throughout the border region, but Kenyan security officials continued to struggle with border security and crisis response in the more remote areas of northeastern Kenya.

In northern Somalia, ISIS-linked fighters used the limited safe haven they established in Puntland to launch small-scale attacks.

Somalia remained heavily dependent on regional and international partners to support almost all major security functions throughout the country, making little progress on improving interagency coordination to limit terrorist transit through the country.

According to independent sources and non-governmental organizations engaged in demining activities on the ground, there was little cause for concern regarding the presence of WMD in Somalia.

ecoi.net summary:

Annual report on terrorism (covering 2018)



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Somalia

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Austrian Red Cross

Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD)

Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien

T (Telefon) +43 1 589 00 583

F (Fax) +43 1 589 00 589

info@ecoi.net

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