

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

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Al Shabaab's Area of Operations

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June 10, 2025

[Notice: The Critical Threats Project frequently cites sources from foreign domains. All such links are identified with an asterisk () for the reader's awareness.]*

Harakat al Shabaab al Mujahideen—commonly known as al Shabaab—is an al Qaeda affiliate based in Somalia. Al Shabaab **emerged** from Somalia's civil war in the 1990s as part of a loose alliance of shari'a courts and armed groups. The group capitalized on the 2006 Ethiopian **invasion** to gain broader support and ultimately **expanded** across much of central and southern Somalia, nearly toppling Somalia's transitional government. Al Shabaab withdrew from Somalia's capital, Mogadishu, in **2011** after African Union forces intervened, and African Union and Kenyan forces pushed the group out of population centers over the next several years. The group formally pledged **allegiance** to al Qaeda in 2012.

Al Shabaab continues to wage an insurgency against the internationally recognized Somali Federal Government (SFG), based in Mogadishu,

and conduct attacks across the Horn of Africa. Al Shabaab controls swaths of central and southern Somalia, where it implements governance and collects **taxes**. It regularly attacks government and security targets across Somalia. Its insurgency **extends** into Kenya's border regions. Between 2015 and 2023, al Shabaab continued to launch deadly bombings and raids in Somalia and Kenya, including the 2019 Nairobi hotel complex **siege** and several major attacks in **Mogadishu**. Al Shabaab also conducted an **incursion** into Ethiopia in late July 2022.

Al Shabaab is al Qaeda's **wealthiest** and most kinetically **active** affiliate and threatens US domestic security and regional interests. The group professes global Salafi-jihadi **ambitions** and has tasked members to **plot** attacks on the United States homeland as recently as 2019. Al Shabaab also threatens US regional interests in the Red Sea through its **collaboration** with the Yemeni Houthis. Unspecified US intelligence officials said in June 2024 that the Houthis and al Shabaab discussed a **deal** for the Houthis to provide weapons—likely drones or missiles—to al Shabaab. The UN **reported** that the Houthis have shipped small arms and light weapons to Shabaab since 2024, and the United States **interdicted** “advanced conventional weapons” that may have included surface to air missile components in 2025. These weapons could support al Shabaab **attacks** on US personnel and systems in the Horn of Africa and Red Sea.

June 2025 Update

Since January 2025, al Shabaab has **re-entered** large swaths of territory in central Somalia which Somali security forces previously captured during a major counterterrorism campaign in 2022. These **advances** enabled it to relink its support zones in central and southern Somalia for the first time since 2022 and threaten the main roads linking Mogadishu to central Somalia. Al Shabaab separately captured **villages**

south of Mogadishu in March that are crucial for Somali forces to defend the capital from al Shabaab vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices. CTP continues to **assess** that al Shabaab is unlikely to launch an offensive on Mogadishu to seize power in the short term, but its gains in central and southern Somalia will allow the group to increase economic and military pressure on Mogadishu and thus destabilize the SFG and undermine the SFG's legitimacy.

You can read regular in-depth analysis on the fight against al Shabaab in CTP's weekly **Africa File.**

You can find CTP's interactive map of the Islamic State in Somalia **here.**

Al Shabaab's Area of Operations

June 11, 2025

Kathryn Tyson

6. juni 2025



Map updated June 1, 2023.

Attack Zone: An area where units conduct offensive maneuvers.

Contested Support Zone: An area where multiple groups conduct offensive and defensive maneuvers. A group may be able to conduct effective logistics and administrative support of forces but has inconsistent access to local populations and key terrain.

Support Zone: An area where a group is not subject to significant enemy action and can conduct effective logistics and administrative support of forces.

Control Zone: An area where a group exerts largely uncontested physical or psychological pressure to ensure that individuals or groups respond as directed. Control zones are a subset of support zones.

Methodology Note: The Critical Threats Project adapts its mapping definitions for insurgencies from US military doctrine, including US Army FM 7-100.1 Opposing Force Operations. Our maps are assessments and reflect analysts' judgment based on current and historical open-source information on security incidents and political and governance activity as well as population and geographic factors. Please contact us for more information on specific maps.

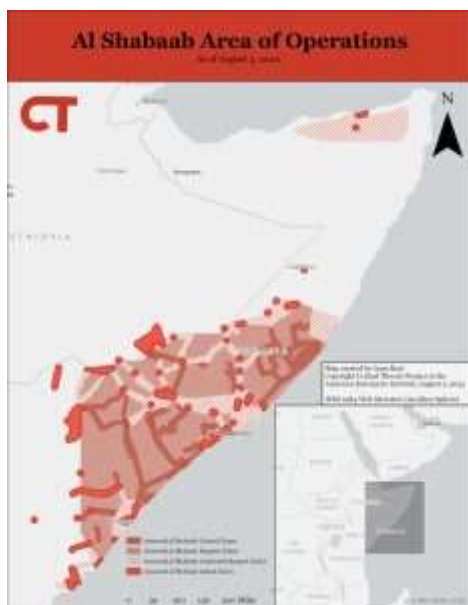
Static maps available upon request.

Prior Versions

November 2023



August 2022



Prior interactive map versions available upon request by emailing criticalthreats@aei.org.