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Al-Shabab has in recent months regrouped and launched a series of counter-attacks (file photo)

The US and Somalia have carried out an airstrike against Islamist militants during a battle for control of a strategic central town, the government says.

The "well-coordinated" strike on Adan Yabaal, north of the capital Mogadishu, came hours after al-Shabab raided the town which is used as a key launchpad for military operations.

Among the 12 militants killed in the airstrike were several senior fighters from the al-Qaeda-linked group, the Somali information ministry [said in a statement on X](#).

The latest fighting comes amid fears of a jihadist resurgence in Somalia after growing militant attacks, including one that targeted President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's convoy last month.

Al-Shabab, which controls large parts of southern and central Somalia, has been fighting the government for nearly 20 years. It seeks to overthrow the federal government and establish an Islamist state.

The African Union-led peacekeeping force helped push the jihadists onto the defensive in 2022 and 2023, but the group remains a big threat despite numerous military operations against it.

The Somali government insists the group has been weakened.

The airstrike late on Wednesday by Somali armed forces and the US Africa Command (Africom) "aimed to neutralize the threat posed" by militants, the information ministry said.

"The targeted strike hit a site used by the militants as a gathering and hideout," it said, adding: "Importantly there were no civilian casualties."

Adan Yabaal, in the Middle Shabelle region, was seized by al-Shabab in 2016 before being recaptured by government forces in 2022.

Heavy fighting broke out early on Wednesday after al-Shabab fighters raided the town, using heavy explosives.

Later the group said it had captured the town. Two local residents told AFP news agency that militants had taken control of Adan Yabaal.

The government did not say who was currently in control of the town.

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud visited the town last month and met military commanders, underscoring its strategic significance in the fight against the militants.

In a separate incident, the national army said it killed at least 25 fighters near the city.

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President Mohamud has downplayed the al-Shabab advances, saying that occasional battlefield setbacks were inevitable. He has maintained that his government was determined to defeat the militants.

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