

Summary

IED, suicide-bomb, and armed attacks by Al-Shabaab gunmen in Mogadishu are occurring with concerning frequency. The storming of the SYL hotel on March 14, near the Presidential palace, which left 5 assailants and 3 soldiers dead, demonstrates Al-Shabaab's continued abilities and intent to threaten Somali government officials and foreign nationals in locations assumed to be safe. A stalled government counter-offensive against Al-Shabaab in the central and Southern regions, and the planned departure of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), makes attacks on Mogadishu more likely.

Recent events and developments

Mogadishu continues to face frequent attacks by Al-Shabaab insurgents, largely targeting Somali National Army (SNA) forces, checkpoints, and convoys. On March 14, five Al-Shabaab gunmen stormed the SYL hotel in Mogadishu, Somalia, near the Presidential palace. In the gunfight, all 5 gunmen were killed, 3 Somali soldiers died, and 27 were injured, including Somali members of parliament. Several government officials and foreign nationals were evacuated. On March 3, an SNA soldier was shot and killed during the night by Al-Shabaab gunmen in the Karam neighbourhood. The same day, a clan elder and a policeman were shot and killed by Al-Shabaab in an intersection in the Radarka neighbourhood. On February 10, Al-Shabaab militants, disguised as SNA soldiers, opened fire at an SNA training centre, killing 18 soldiers in the Hodan neighbourhood. IED attacks occur frequently too. On March 3, an Al-Shabaab IED killed 3 SNA soldiers in the Waxaracade neighbourhood. On March 2, an Al-Shabaab IED attack in the Daynile neighbourhood killed 3 SNA soldiers. On February 19, Al Shabaab detonated an IED targeting an SNA convoy which injured 3 soldiers and killed 5 civilians in the Heliwa neighbourhood of Mogadishu. On February 6, four Al-Shabaab IEDs planted in the Bakara market detonated, killing 7 civilians and injuring tens of bystanders. On January 16, an Al-Shabaab suicide bomber targeting government officials killed 7 people in the Hamar Weyne neighbourhood. Most Al-Shabaab attacks, with some exceptions, target government buildings and officials, SNA soldiers, checkpoints and convoys.

Impact assessment

In August 2023, Somali president Hassan Sheikh Mohamud announced ambitious plans to capture territories held by Al-Shabaab, mostly in Hirshabelle and Galmadug states. Whilst initial offensives saw success, current SNA attempts to capture Al-Shabaab territory, especially in Southern Somalia, have stalled due to various overlapping logistical, political, and military issues, which could make Al-Shabaab incursions into and attacks on Mogadishu more likely. Furthermore, the SNA is struggling to recruit and retain new soldiers due to financial limitations and disputes with regional government administrations reluctant to merge their local forces with the SNA. At the same time, Al-Shabaab continues to carry out frequent attacks against government officials and SNA forces in the capital. Since the start of 2024, 84 people have died in Al-Shabaab IED and armed attacks in Mogadishu, many of which have been civilians. 41 of those victims were killed in the one-month period between February 8 and March 8, constituting a worrying increase in the frequency and violence of Al-Shabaab attacks. As the SNA military campaign against Al-Shabaab stalls, and as the 13,000 strong peacekeeping force of the ATMIS is set to leave at the end of 2024, it is highly likely that such attacks will continue to occur with worrying frequency. Whilst most attacks have targeted SNA forces, the most recent HYL hotel attack demonstrates Al-Shabaab's capacity to carry out high-profile attacks on buildings where Somali officials and foreign nationals are likely to be located. Government and administrative buildings, SNA checkpoints, convoys and soldiers, and hotels are highly likely to be targeted.

Advice from Forth Global

- Advise staff traveling to Somalia to undertake a several days long HEAT training prior to travel.
- Monitor local news, and liaise with local partners to remain updated on developing events.
- Advise staff to avoid government buildings, SNA facilities, and crowded areas.
- Cooperate with local police and security forces.

Customized advice

Please contact us for specific advice:

+31 (0) 35 543 04 37
christiaan@forthglobal.com

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