

SOMALIA AL-SHABAAB

Party Portrait

Al-Shabaab is one of the most potent armed groups and terrorist organizations in the Horn of Africa, with an estimated 9,000 combatants (including foreign nationals) fighting largely within the territory of Somalia. The target of counterinsurgency operations led by the United Nations, African Union and Federal Government of Somalia, al-Shabaab continues to pose a significant threat to regional security. Al-Shabaab has fought to secure territory within Somalia and to expand and deepen its ties with Al-Qaeda. Evidence suggests that weapons from both Iran and Yemen have found their way to the hands of Al-Shabaab fighters within Somalia. Many of Al-Shabaab's combatants are reportedly focused on local grievances, rather than waging global jihad against the "enemies of Islam."

Key Interests

- Increasing financial and military capacities;
- Controlling territory in Somalia;
- Acts of terror against countries / nationals of countries deploying troops to peace operations in Somalia

Sources of Leverage

Military – Threat of terrorist attack throughout the Horn of Africa and large swathes of East Africa.

Regional Strategy

Al-Shabaab has sought to cultivate partnerships with state and non-state entities that have the potential to provide military and financial support for its operations. While Somalia has aligned itself with Saudi Arabia, Al-Shabaab is alleged to have pursued ties with Tehran. And with civil war waging in Yemen, Al-Shabaab has profited from increased small arms proliferation just across the Gulf of Aden. Al-Shabaab prioritizes ties with Al-Qaeda.

Powerful Individuals

Ahmed Omar assumed the self-appointed role of "Emir" of Al-Shabaab in September 2014, following the death of his predecessor Ahmed Abdi Godane in a US airstrike that same month.

Potential Negotiation Moves

Potential to threaten terrorist attacks not only against Western and African targets within Somalia, but potentially also in neighboring states such as Eritrea and Djibouti. Al-Shabaab may also seek partnerships with ISIS, and to develop more overt partnerships with countries including Iran.

Internal Conflicts

Al-Shabaab has countless internal factions and divisions, with many disputing the extent to which it represents a single unitary actor. Each regional unit's recruits are likely driven by highly localized grievances, undermining the extent to which a single jihadist ideology can motivate the entire organization.

Memberships

N/A

Allies

AQAP

Partners

IRAN

Rivals

N/A

Adversaries

FRANCE, RUSSIA, CHINA, INDIA, JAPAN, YEMEN Government, SAUDI ARABIA, UNITED STATES, UNITED KINGDOM

Active Armed Opponents

SOMALIA – GOVERNMENT, UNITED NATIONS

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

N/A