



[Al Shabaab: the rise and fall from Black Hawk Down to Westgate and beyond](#)

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For four days in late September, the upscale Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, Kenya suffered a brutal and savage terror attack from a previously little known Islamist militant group. Al Shabaab became an international household name overnight and their Twitter followers soared by the thousands¹ as their “*press officers*” espoused its ambitions and claims of responsibility. However its tactics and methods were not new and derive from al Shabaab’s origins and past missions. What the attack did demonstrate was that al Shabaab has peaked and is attempting to reverse its seemingly unstoppable decline.

After the fall of the authoritarian regime of Mohammed Siad Barre in 1991, the state collapsed and Somalia fell into anarchy². Successive UN peacekeeping missions and transitional governments failed to restore order, even the famed ‘Black Hawk Down’ US intervention in 1993 did not halt the rise of militancy, warlords and Islamists. During the chaos, the veteran Al-Ittihad Al-Islamiya (AIAI) emerged with the *ummah* vision of a greater Somalia formed by annexing parts of Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti. By 1997, intervention from Ethiopia had crushed this dream, but elements broke free to travel to Afghanistan to train under the Taleban and Al Qaeda³. Originally just thirty-five members strong, most had returned with Adan Hashi Farah “Ayro” in 2003 from the battlefields of Afghanistan. Harakat al Shabaab al-Mujahideen or shortened in the West to al Shabaab, Arabic for “*The Movement for Striving Youth*” or “*The Youth*”, was formally founded in 2005 from this element.

Al Shabaab follows in the long ancestry of prominent Somali Islamist groups in seeking the *ummah*, a vision of the triumph of a unified Islamic state under *shari’a* law over the centuries old tribalism⁴. From 2006 onwards, it sought to achieve its goals under the unified command of the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) as the strong militia force⁵. Internal differences arising from the perceived Westernisation and dilution of the UIC following ‘moderate’ Sheikh Sharriff’s election to the leadership led al Shabaab to separate and operate as an independent group⁶.

Through exploiting the weakness of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and the popular resentment directed against both the Ethiopian troops after their 2006 invasion and the later presence of the African Union Mission in Somalia army (AMISOM), al Shabaab came to resonate with the local population. For those that it did not attract, fear, repression and a

¹ Before being promptly removed by Twitter moderators, it subsequently reappeared and was once again deleted.

² Paris, R. *At war’s end: Building peace after civil conflict* (Cambridge University Press, 2004) pp.1-56

³ Major General Nathan Mugisha, ‘The Way Forward in Somalia’, *RUSI Journal*, 21st June 2011 p.29

⁴ Mitchell Sipus, ‘Support for al-Shabaab through the Diaspora’, *Forced Migration Register*, Vol. 37

⁵ Ioannis Mantzikos, ‘Somalia and Yemen: The Links between Terrorism and State Failure’, *Digest of Middle East Studies—Volume 20, Number 2* (2011) p.247

⁶ Major General Nathan Mugisha (2011) p.29

violently imposed Islamisation⁷ (which included stoning, cutting off limbs and summary executions) was enough to cement its vast territorial control and obtain acceptance/submission from large civilian populations. This, at its 2009-2010 height, included most of southern Somalia and a strong influence throughout the capital of Mogadishu. As its influence spread, al Shabaab's ranks swelled with experience drawn from the 'Afghan alumni', veterans of the anti-Soviet mujahedeen in Afghanistan; Yemeni allies; the merger with Hizb-ul-Islam after years of rivalry and eventual military defeat and training with al Qaeda⁸.

The leadership of this original group was focused on three African al Qaeda operators, Abu Talha Al-Sudani, Fadil Harun and Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan, who are all implicated in the 1998 US embassy bombings in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi⁹. Further links have been identified to the recruiting, training and smuggling of weaponry involved in the 2002 attack in Mombasa, Kenya¹⁰. Al Shabaab's formal links with Al Qaeda were announced in February 2012 when new al Qaeda leader Ayman Al-Zawahiri stated "I hereby declare that the militants of Harakatu Al Shabaab Al- Mujaahedeen of the Horn of Africa are now united with their fellow Islamists"¹¹ on al Shabaab controlled al-Andalus radio. As such, al Shabaab is no stranger to foreign terrorist attacks, with its history rooted in the Afghan jihad, Yemeni terror cells and Al Qaeda links. Indeed al Shabaab has grown in its original scale of operations and is now turning its attention to international operations against targets as far flung as Burundi¹², the United States¹³, Britain¹⁴ and Israel¹⁵.

However, the risk of al Shabaab should be placed in context. It is estimated that they lack the capability and popular support to continue Kenyan attacks and overseas operations¹⁶. The finances of al Shabaab derive from extortion and protection rackets in Somali-controlled territory and from expat communities such as Eastleigh in Kenya. But censorship of free speech, the strict enforcement of women fully covering themselves and unrelenting poverty in both communities have led to backlashes against their strict Islamist rule¹⁷. In Somalia AMISOM has progressively forced al Shabaab out of 80 per cent of Mogadishu¹⁸. This, combined with the loss of control of the Kenyan border and its shrinking control over the Ethiopian border has left

⁷ Mazzetti, G. & Gettleman, J. 'U.S. used base in Ethiopia to hunt Al Qaeda in Africa', *New York Times*, February 23rd 2007

⁸ Stig Jarle Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group, 2005–2012*, (Hurst 2013) pp.20-21

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Ioannis Mantzikos, (2011) p.247

¹¹ Africa Research Bulletin, February 2013 and 'Somalia's al-Shabab join al-Qaeda', *BBC*, 10th February 2012 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-16979440> (accessed 13th October 2013)

¹² Major General Nathan Mugisha (2011) p.23

¹³ Fran Townsend, George Bush's former Homeland Security advisors transcript, *ABC*, 23rd September 2013, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-09-23/fears-al-shabaab-a-significant-global-terror-threat/4974224> (accessed 15th October 2013)

¹⁴ Paul Bentley, Britain warned by hate preacher who recruited Nairobi mall massacre killers, *Daily Mail*, 30th September 2013 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2438018/Britain-warns-hate-preacher-recruited-Nairobi-mall-massacre-killers.html> (accessed 15th October 2013)

¹⁵ Anshel Pfeffer quoted in Israel's Ha'aretz in 'World press warns of wider threat after Kenya attack', *BBC*, 24th September 2013 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-24226112> (accessed 15th October 2013)

¹⁶ Scott Stewart, Al Shabaab's Threat to Kenya, *StratFor Security Weekly*, 26th April 2012 <http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/al-shabaabs-threat-kenya> (accessed 15th October 2013)

¹⁷ Mitchell Sipus, 'Support for al-Shabaab through the Diaspora', *Forced Migration Register*, Vol.37

¹⁸ Major General Nathan Mugisha (2011) p.23

the group isolated and in retreat. The stunning advances made by AMISON in 2011-2013 which have culminated in the capture of the port of Kismayo and the cities of Baidoa, Beledweyne and Marka has signalled the death knell for al Shabaab's domestic territorial integrity. Without these vital areas it is estimated that al Shabaab has lost between \$35 million to \$50 million a year¹⁹.

More worrying for al Shabaab, the United States has learned of links between the group and Iran, Uganda and Eritrean governments²⁰. This, united with their links to al Qaeda and Yemen, has made them a prime target in Washington's ongoing War on Terror. Since 2007 there have been at least twelve targeted drone and naval strikes on key leadership targets and logistical sites by United States intelligence and Special Forces as part of the efforts to erode al Shabaab's operational capabilities²¹.

The latest of these occurred on October 6th in the wake of the Westgate attack, in which US Navy SEALs unsuccessfully attempted to kill or capture senior al Shabaab leader Abdulkadir Mohamed Abdulkadir, known as Ikrimah, in a villa in Barawe²². Ikrimah, of Kenyan citizenship and Somali birth²³, is believed to be the senior al Shabaab commander responsible for planning international attacks and is thought to have an additional, logistical role within al Shabaab's structure. He is also known for maintaining relations with al Shabaab's Kenyan, al Qaeda-affiliated ally al Hijrah, formerly known as the Muslim Youth Center, who took part in the joint attack on the Westgate shopping mall. As Ayman al-Zawahiri was, and likely still is, obsessed with toppling the Government of his native Egypt, so Ikrimah appears to have a preoccupation with Kenya. A leaked Kenyan intelligence report suggests that Ikrimah was behind a string of foiled plots in Kenya between 2011 and 2012²⁴. The document, dated one year to the day before the Westgate attack, also mentions Westgate as a likely target. The earlier attacks were reportedly supposed to happen in late 2011 and early 2012 and targeted the Kenyan Parliament, the UN offices in Nairobi, camps belonging to the Kenyan Defence Forces and also high-profile assassinations of Kenyan political and security officials. It is also believed that these attacks were planned by Ikrimah in conjunction with the White Widow Samantha Lewthwaite, who is believed to have been involved in the Westgate attack. In the raid on Barawe, Navy SEALs entered into a protracted fire-fight with al Shabaab militia-men and whilst it is reported that several militants were killed it was later confirmed that Ikrimah was not amongst the dead²⁵.

The recent failed operation notwithstanding, these killings have eroded al Shabaab at a time when it desperately needs the experience and strength to turn the tide against the AMISOM

¹⁹ James Verini, 'The Last Stand of Somali's Jihad', *Foreign Policy*, December 17th 2012

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/12/17/the_last_stand_of_somalias_jihad

²⁰ Jihadists, Inspired by al-Shabaab, on the move in Africa – *Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy*, 2010; Vol. 38, No. 7 p.24

²¹ Refer to the list in Appendix.

²² Jon Swaine and David Blair, 'US Navy Seals 'targeted senior al-Shabaab commander' in Somalia raid', *Daily Telegraph*, October 5th 2013,

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/somalia/10358587/US-Navy-Seals-targeted-senior-al-Shabaab-commander-in-Somalia-raid.html> (accessed October 17th 2013)

²³ 'Profile: Al-Shabab's 'Ikrima'', BBC News, 8th October 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-24442793> (accessed 17th October 2013)

²⁴ 'Target of SEAL raid in Somalia planned attacks in Kenya', CBS News, October 7th 2013, http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-202_162-57606371/target-of-seal-raid-in-somalia-planned-attacks-in-kenya/ (accessed October 17th 2013)

²⁵ D.H., 'Mission Failure', *The Economist*, 7th October 2013, <http://www.economist.com/node/21587421> (accessed 17th October 2013)

offensives. Whilst operational recruitment for suicide bombers and foot-soldiers is, if anything, becoming a simpler task for the likes of al Qaeda and al Shabaab, there is no substitute for knowledge, experience or talent. This is the hallmark of an effective military-based counterterrorism strategy: neutralising functional nodes in the terror network that cannot easily be replaced such as strategists, ideologues, explosives experts, veteran fighters etc. As with multinational corporations, procurement of talented, learned strategists and commanders is a long, arduous and resource-intensive process.

However, the greatest danger currently facing al Shabaab is not from external factors, but from its own internal strife. When Ethiopia ousted the UIC from Mogadishu, the defeat had a powerful effect on the leadership and their perceptions UIC's limitations and the need to retreat South to morph into a fully-fledge guerrilla movement²⁶.

The split from the UIC also removed a vast Islamic base for the movement in Somalia, forcing al Shabaab to accept ever growing numbers of radical Muslim militants from the wider global jihadist movement to continue to maintain its dominant position in Somali society. Masters of international propaganda and glitzy videos, they attracted an estimated 300 to 1,500 foreign fighters to join the ranks of the estimated 8,000-12,000 indigenous personnel²⁷. They arrived from neighbouring Kenya and Tanzania and from its international allies not only in Yemen and Afghanistan, but crucially from Nigeria, Sudan, Algeria, Morocco, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Chechnya, the US, Scandinavia and Britain²⁸. These new arrivals brought new and unexpected difficulties. Their firebrand Islamist views and differing national experiences diluted the movement's message of national Islamic liberation. Moreover their willing to cause mass civilian casualties did not chime with the nationalistic portrayal of Islam that al Shabaab spreads throughout its controlled regions. This is one of the challenges that globalisation poses for all globalised, networked jihadist group as mentioned in a previous article published by the HIC, 'Heads of the Hydra – al Qaeda's new direction'²⁹. Jihadist groups are victims of their own successful propaganda, radicalising aggressive men so strongly that they engage in extreme, frenzied violence so vigorously that local population are frightened away from the group's wider message of a unified *ummah* against Western, hedonistic imperialism. The most prominent example of this phenomenon is Abu Musab al Zarqawi, the erstwhile leader of al Qaeda in Iraq, now the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria or ISIS, which is very active in the Syrian conflict. A Jordanian militant known for running one of the terror camps in Afghanistan which was closed during Operation Enduring Freedom in 2001, Zarqawi masterminded a bloodthirsty campaign of beheadings and bombings which al Qaeda's central leadership recognised as harming their appeal to the wider Shia community in Iraq³⁰.

²⁶ Jonathan Masters, 'Al-Shabab', *Council of Foreign Relations*, September 23rd 2013
<http://www.cfr.org/somalia/al-shabab/p18650#p7> (accessed on October 15th 2013)

²⁷ AMISON estimate (2013)

²⁸ Abdi O. Shuriye, 'Policies and Views of the UN and Western Nations on Al-Shabaab and Its Recruitment Strategies', *Review of European Studies*, Vol.4, No.1, March 2012 pp.221-227

²⁹ Simon Schofield, 'Heads of the Hydra – al Qaeda's new direction', October 2nd 2013, Humanitarian Intervention Centre, <http://hicentre.org/2013/10/02/heads-of-the-hydra-al-qaedas-new-direction/> (accessed October 17th 2013)

³⁰ 'Profile: Abu Musab al-Zarqawi', BBC News, 10th November 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/3483089.stm> (accessed 17th October 2013)

Sheikh Mukhtar Robow and the nationalist faction within al Shabaab rejected the foreign fighters' internationalist vision, attacks on humanitarian aid agencies and innocent Muslims and resented the idea of Somalia being just another battlefield for the global jihad³¹. As such, al Shabaab's internal "friction" spilled over onto the internet, where senior figures such as Omar Hammami, an al Shabaab military commander, propagandist and closely linked al Qaeda operative, openly warned that personal and religious differences between Somali and foreign fighters imperiled the group³². Omar made a telling comment that "we are afraid that this conflict might end soon in the favour of those who don't want the battalions of global jihad to take off from the Land of the Two Emigrations [Somalia]", which shows the true extent of al Shabaab's own internal doubt about their future.

This situation for al Shabaab is constantly being exacerbated by AMISOM and US drone strikes which have seen foreign fighters promoted over local fighters and the forced recruitment of Somali men and children to swell the diluted and quarrelsome ranks³³. As such, defection rates have been consistently high in 2013 with over 1,600 former fighters currently being rehabilitated by the Somali government with UN funding³⁴.

In this light we must look on the Westgate mall attack as a vastly important tale in the history of al Shabaab. It comes at a time when its power is declining and its own internal problems have caused immense difficulties in operating as a coherent fighting force. While al Shabaab's alliance with al Qaeda has been interpreted as a cynical ploy to open itself to donations and a vast pool of experience foreign fighters³⁵, it has also exposed it to the wrath of the United States and European Union³⁶. As such it has seen its power eroded at the time when it needs it most to counter the African Union onslaught against its key territorial positions. The Westgate attack can therefore be seen as a dangerous sign of how al Shabaab will deal with its decline. It is likely to continue to resort to violent and desperate surprise attacks with the aim of killing and maiming as many non-Muslims (designated as *khuffar*) and Muslims deemed apostates (a practice known as *takfir*) as possible.

These attacks challenge intelligence agencies as they are difficult to detect and intercept, or, as in Kenya, even if they are detected they can often be sidelined in contradictory intelligence reports. Spectacular terrorist attacks which will dominate headlines and rolling new coverage, can be achieved at the expense of only a few well-trained martyrs. Whilst strategically these attacks are futile, they should be seen as the death throes of a wounded organisation in decline. As a demonstration of this, that there has been a recent spike in violence against soft targets in Mogadishu is, in the words of analyst Hassan Adukar; 'perhaps to distract its fighters from

³¹ Nathan Mugisha (2011) p.29

³² Bill Roggio, 'Omar Hammami says 'friction' exists between Shabaab, foreign fighters', *Long War Journal*, October 20th 2012 http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/10/omar_hammami_says_fr.php (accessed on October 15th 2013)

³³ Ioannis Mantzikos (2011) pp.250-251

³⁴ 'Somalia: Somali Govt vows to welcome al-Shabaab defectors', *All Africa*, 5th July 2013 <http://allafrica.com/stories/201307081335.html> (accessed on 15th October 2013)

³⁵ T. McConnell, 'Who's funding Al Shabaab war in Somalia?', *Global Post*, December 5th 2010

³⁶ See Appendix, May 15th 2012 entry.

debilitating fragmentation among its leaders'³⁷, these serve only to mask the internal and external factors which are hastening its demise.

The international coverage of the attack in September will most likely accelerate the pace of arrivals of foreign fighters, which will only lead to further internal conflict and alienation of the Somali population and diaspora. The most worrying factor for the Somali Transitional Federal Government and for the international community is the potential for al Shabaab to split into rival factions with the nationalists peeling away from the hardliner Islamist extremists. In July 2013, al Shabaab emir, Ahmed Adbi Godane successfully mounted coups against rival internal factions led by Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys and Mukhtar Robow, killing veterans and founders of the movement³⁸. Without a constraint on its behaviour, the nationalist factions could seek to regain ground in a new-wave revival of its fortunes (if it survives the purges), whilst more realistically the hardliners will seek to concentrate on meeting their own radical and dangerous international aspirations over its failing domestic attacks. Al Shabaab is beyond a crossroads in its history. The group stands to lose everything, but how it goes about responding to that loss is potentially the most dangerous aspect of its demise. We have yet to see al Shabaab last hurrah.

³⁷ Hassan M. Abukar, Somalia: The Godane Coup and the Unravelling of Al-Shabaab, *African Arguments (Royal African Society)*, July 2nd 2013 <http://africanarguments.org/2013/07/02/somalia-the-godane-coup-and-the-unraveling-of-al-shabaab—by-hassan-m-abukar/> (accessed on 15th October 2013)

³⁸ Ibid.

Appendix of foreign military action since 2007 in Somalia:

This appendix is built from collected tweets of @DroneStream – reporting every US drone strike since 2002³⁹ - cross referenced with at least two major news outlets confirming the initial Somali reported story or an acknowledgement or statement from the US government. Disputed reports have single sources or disputed origins of the striking force and, as such, cannot be attributed to a foreign military intervention. For the sake of space, al Shabaab has been shortened to ALS.

This rigorous confirmation process is to prevent corruption of the timeline from Iranian *Press TV* reports, which has reported on 56 US drone strikes within Somalia, which, according to their sources, have killed 1,370⁴⁰. However, a detailed and thorough evaluation by The Bureau of Investigative Journalism discovered only four attacks could be identified⁴¹.

The timeline, produced by the HIC, enlarges on previous work conducted by The Bureau and Global Research. Global Research's own report into US strikes reported that an estimated 3-9 US drone strikes and a further 7-14 covert US operations have occurred in Somalia since 2001 with a total of 54-170 militants killed and 8-60 civilians killed, with a reported 14-44 injured⁴².

- **CONFIRMED** - October 6th 2013 - In the wake of the Westgate mall attack in Kenya, a team from the US Navy SEAL Naval Warfare Development Group (DevGru, also known colloquially by its previous moniker SEAL Team Six) swam ashore with a mission to kill or capture Abdulkadir Mohamed Abdulkadir, known as Ikrimah, in a villa in Barawe. A fierce 15-20 minute fire-fight ensued and the SEAL team could not complete their objective. At least one ALS militant was killed, which was confirmed by a group spokesman. The raid was co-ordinated with the Delta Force capture of al Qaeda's Abu Anas al-Libi in Tripoli, Libya. Al Shabaab claimed British SAS and Turkish Special Forces took part in the raid but there is no evidence to back these claims.
- **CONFIRMED** – May 27th 2013 - Scheobel Camcopter S-100 crashes near the town of Bulo-Marer, near Mogadishu. Believed to have been operated by France. The drone was operating near the location of the January 12th 2013 failed French commando mission to rescue Denis Alex, a French intelligence officer.
- **DISPUTED** – Aug 24th 2012 – It is possible that international forces launched strikes either by air or naval forces near the town of Qandala, Puntland.
- **CONFIRMED** – May 15th 2012 – EU Naval Forces (NAVFOR) under Operation Atlanta attacked an alleged pirate base near Haradheere destroying nine speedboats, an arm dump and fuel supplies.

³⁹ <https://twitter.com/dronestream> (accessed on October 2nd 2013)

⁴⁰ The list of *Press TV*'s claims can be accessed here: 'US covert actions in Somalia Press TV's Somalia claims 2011-12', December 2nd 2011

<http://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/blog/2011/12/02/the-press-tv-claims/> (accessed on October 2nd 2013)

⁴¹ Slater, E. & Woods, C. 'US covert actions in Somalia: Iranian TV station 'faked' Somali deaths by US drones, December 2nd 2011 <http://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2011/12/02/iranian-tv-station-faked-1370-somali-deaths-by-us-drones/> (accessed on October 2nd 2013)

⁴² Jake Serle, 'US Covert Actions and Drone Attacks in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia: September 2013 Update', *Global Research and The Bureau of Investigative Journalism*, October 1st 2013 <http://www.globalresearch.ca/us-covert-actions-in-pakistan-yemen-and-somalia-september-2013-update/5352409> (accessed on October 2nd 2013)

- **CONFIRMED** - Feb 24th 2012 – 4 ALS fighters killed (at least one being an international fighter, a white Kenyan killed in the strike was not the target) in an attack in the Lower Shabelle region, Southern Somalia – Confirmed by Somalian and US defence officials
- **CONFIRMED** - Jan 21, 2012 – Foreign commander of ALS with links to Al Qaeda, Bilal al-Barjawi (27) killed about 8 miles south of Mogadishu. US drone possibly located him due to receiving a phone call from his wife in London on the birth of his child whilst driving near the town of Elasha Biyaha. He was a veteran fighter having joined ALS after fighting in Afghanistan in 2006, the same year his British citizenship was revoked.
- **CONFIRMED** - Nov 14, 2011 – Between 0-2 Islamic insurgency leaders killed by an unknown drone strike in Afgoye during a meeting of ALS commanders. US Pentagon officials denied involvement and instead suggested French origins.
- **DISPUTED** - Oct 23, 2011 – Possible Kenyan airstrike but also attributed to France and the US. 0-1 killed in Kismayo
- **DISPUTED** – Oct 22 2011 – At least 11 civilians killed and more than 20 others wounded after a US drone strike on Afmadow, Lower Jubba.
- **DISPUTED** – Oct 13 2011 – Somali National Forces claim a drone strike from a friendly nation destroyed a large ALS base near Taabta. Unknown casualties.
- **DISPUTED** - Oct 6, 2011 – US drone fired two missiles in Dolbiyow village, 35km east of Dhobley district in Somalia's Lower Juba region. Target believed to have been ALS convoy transiting through the village. Locals claim strike killed 4 farmers and 'at least 10 camels'. Local Somalia Transitional Government Forces claim that ALS mortar attacks were responsible for the deaths.
- **CONFIRMED** - Sep 25, 2011 – US MQ-1 Predator drones attacked three targets within the port city of Kismayo. Residents reported 'explosions around the city'. Reports that ALS contributed to the crash of a "large drone".
- **DISPUTED** – Sep 15 2011 – Residents of Kismayo reported hearing aircraft and sounds of three explosions. There was no further confirmation.
- **DISPUTED** – Jul 6 2011 – Unknown number killed when airstrikes hit three ALS militant training camps in Afmadow, Lower Jubba. No evidence to suggest it was a US drone strike.
- **CONFIRMED** - Jun 23, 2011: Somalia's first known lethal drone strike, 0-3 mid-level operatives of ALS were killed and 'others' injured. Pentagon confirmed that the strike was carried out by the Joint Special Operations Command. US helicopters arrived to retrieve some of the dead and injured for verification and intelligence purposes.
- **CONFIRMED** – Sep 14th 2009 – US Navy SEAL Special Forces kill Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan, a senior leader of the group after three years of tracking. Intelligence indicated that he was part of the operation that carried out the 1998 bombings of US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Five other militants were killed while breakfasting.
- **CONFIRMED** – May 1 2008 – US naval forces launch at least four Tomahawk cruise missiles as part of strike plan against a meeting of insurgent leaders in Dusa Marreb. At

least two senior commanders died, ALS leader Aden Hashi Ayro and Sheikh Muhyadin Omar. Up to 15 militants died with five children.

- **CONFIRMED** – Mar 3rd 2008 – Pentagon confirms that the US conducted an attack against known Al Qaeda terrorists operating in Southern Somalia. The strike, possibly by an AC-130 gunship, targeted Hassan Turki and al Qaeda leader Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan. Witnesses report that 4-8 civilians died with 3-8 injured.
- **CONFIRMED** – Jun 1 2007 – USS Chafee fired more than a dozen rounds from its 5-inch gun against 35 heavily armed militants near Bargal, Puntland. The fire support mission was in co-ordination with three American counter-terror officials working alongside Somali and Ethiopian troops. 8-12 militants died.
- **DISPUTED** – March 2007 – SAS and US Delta Force enter Somalia to identify the remains of foreign fighters killed in Jan 23rd mission, DNA samples from 50 bodies was recovered.
- **CONFIRMED** – Jan 23rd 2007 – AC-130 gunship operating from eastern Ethiopia targets Ahmed Madobe and deputy UIC leader Hassan Turki. Madobe survived the attack but was captured by US and Ethiopian forces. 8 others militants were killed.
- **DISPUTED** – Jan 9th 2007 – Between 4-31 civilians including 1 child were killed in Hayi by a possible US helicopter strike. In a separate incident, a US AC-130 gunship conducted a strike against members of an East Africa al Qaeda cell in four towns near Ras Kamboni. Between 5-10 militants reported to have been killed. The latter attack was denied by US officials but cables released by Wikileaks and an anonymous intelligence officials speaking to the press confirmed the attack.
- **CONFIRMED** - Jan 7 2007 – An AC-130 gunship attacks a suspected al Qaeda convoy after being tracked by a Predator drone. Pentagon confirmed that targets were related to the 1998 embassy bombings. Somali government confirmed 2 civilians died and “many” nomadic tribal men. This was denied by US and instead claimed 8 militants died and three were injured.