

Al-Shabaab



Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen, more commonly known as al-Shabaab, is a Salafist jihadist fundamentalist group based in East Africa. In 2012, it pledged allegiance to the militant Islamist organization Al-Qaeda. In February of the year, some of the group's leaders quarreled with Al-Qaeda over the union, and quickly lost ground. Al-Shabaab's troop strength was estimated at 7,000 to 9,000 militants in 2014. As of 2015, the group has retreated from the major cities, controlling a few rural areas.

Al-Shabaab is an offshoot of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), which splintered into several smaller factions after its defeat in 2006 by Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and the TFG's Ethiopian military allies. The group describes itself as waging jihad against "enemies of Islam", and is engaged in combat against the Federal Government of Somalia and the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM). Al-Shabaab has been designated as a terrorist organization by Australia, Canada, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States. As of June 2012, the US State Department has open bounties on several of the group's senior commanders.

In early August 2011, the Transitional Federal Government's troops and their AMISOM allies managed to capture all of Mogadishu from the Al-Shabaab militants. An ideological rift within the group's leadership also emerged, and several of the organization's senior commanders were assassinated. Due to its Wahhabi roots, Al Shabaab is hostile to Sufi traditions, and has often clashed with the militant Sufi group Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a. The group has also been suspected of having links with Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb and Boko Haram. Additionally, it attracted some members from western countries, notably Samantha Lewthwaite and Abu Mansoor Al-Amriki.

In August 2014, the Somali government-led Operation Indian Ocean was launched to clean up the remaining insurgent-held pockets in the countryside. On 1 September 2014, a U.S. drone strike carried out as part of the broader mission killed Al-Shabaab leader Moktar Ali Zubeyr. U.S. authorities hailed the raid as a major symbolic and operational loss for al-Shabaab, and the Somali government offered a 45-day amnesty to all moderate members of the militant group.

Organization:

Al-Shabaab's composition is multiethnic, with its leadership positions mainly occupied by Afghanistan- and Iraq-trained ethnic Somalis and foreigners. According to the National Counterterrorism Center, the group's rank-and-file members hail from disparate local groups, sometimes recruited by force. Unlike most of the organization's top leaders, its foot soldiers are primarily concerned with nationalist and clan-related affairs as opposed to the global jihad. They are also prone to infighting and shifting alliances. According to the Jamestown Foundation, Al-Shabaab seeks to exploit these vulnerabilities by manipulating clan networks in order to retain power. The group itself is likewise not entirely immune to local politics. More recently, Muslim converts from neighbouring countries have been conscripted, typically to do undesirable or difficult work.

Although al-Shabaab's leadership ultimately falls upon al-Qaeda leader Ameer Ragheb, the internal leadership is not fully clear, and with foreign fighters trickling out of the country, its structure is increasingly decentralized. Ahmed Abdi Godane was publicly named as emir of al-Shabaab in December 2007. In August 2011, Godane was heavily criticized by Al-Shabaab co-founder Hassan Dahir Aweys and others for not letting aid into the hunger stricken parts of southern Somalia. Although not formally announced, Shabaab was effectively split up into a "foreign legion," led by Godane, and a coalition of factions forming a "national legion" under Aweys. The latter group often refused to take orders from Godane and the two groups hardly talked to each other. In February 2012, Godane made Bay'ah, or an oath of allegiance, to al-Qaeda. With it he likely hoped to reclaim and extend his authority, and to encourage foreign fighters to stay. This move will further complicate the cooperation with the "national legion" of al-Shabaab. Godane was killed in a U.S. drone strike in Somalia on September 1, 2014. Ahmad Umar was named Godane's successor on 6 September 2014, he is believed to have previously played a role in al-Shabaab's internal secret service known as Amniya.

Ideology:

Al-Shabaab proliferates their propaganda through various media. It operates its own radio station, Radio Andalus, and has acquired relay stations and seized other equipment from private radio stations, including some from the BBC. Presenters broadcast in Somali, Arabic, Swahili and English. Besides radio, the Internet is the most heavily utilized by Al-Shabaab and other militant Islamic groups such as Al-Qaeda because it is the easiest and most cost-effective way to reach a large audience. As the internet is especially popular with today's youth, organizations such as Al-Shabaab are using online forums and chat rooms to recruit young followers. Al-Shabaab's official website, which has since been taken down, featured posts, videos and official statements in English, Arabic and Somali, as well as online classrooms to educate followers. Prior to its expulsion from Mogadishu in mid-2011, Al-Shabaab had also launched the Al-Kataib propaganda television station the year before. The channel's pilot program aired the confessions of Ahmed Kisi, an alleged CIA spy who had been executed earlier in the week.

In addition, Al-Shabaab also uses music to influence and appeal to young followers. According to Robin Wright, "By 2010, almost eight out of every ten soldiers in Somalia's many rebel forces were children," who are especially influenced and susceptible messages conveyed to modern, western-themed music. One of Al Shabaab's foreign-born leaders, American Omar Hammami a.k.a. Abu Mansoor Al-Amriki, gained notoriety after an April 2009 video of him rapping about jihad. Hammami's most recent song, "Send Me a Cruise", debuted online on April 9, 2011.

In October 2013 Al-Shabaab issued a propaganda video targeting several British Muslims who had spoken out against Islamist extremism, some of them explicitly against the murder of Lee Rigby. The video urged jihadists in the UK to follow the example of Rigby's killers, to arm themselves if necessary with knives from B&Q. The Muslims named in the video for "selling out" included Mohammed Shafiq, Mohammed Ansar, Usama Hasan and Ajmal Masroor.

In February 2015, Al-Shabaab released another propaganda video calling for attacks on shopping malls in the U.S., Canada and the U.K., including the West Edmonton Mall in Alberta, Canada and the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota, U.S. Although the group had hitherto only ever launched attacks within East Africa, security at both malls was tightened in response. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police also indicated that there was no evidence of any imminent threat.

Leaders:

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- ❖ Ahmad Umar (Abu Ubaidah) (2014–)
- ❖ Moktar Ali Zubeyr "Godane" (2007–2014) (Arab sub-clan of northern Isaaq clan) (killed in U.S. drone strike in 2014)

Other leaders:

- ❖ Mukhtar Robow "Abu Mansoor" – Second Deputy Leader and regional commander in charge of Bay and Bakool.
- ❖ Fuad Mohammed Khalaf "Shangole" – third-most important leader after "Abu Mansoor". In charge of public affairs. (Awrtabe sub-clan of Darod)
- ❖ Hassan Dahir Aweys – spiritual leader (surrendered to Federal Government in 2013.)
- ❖ Hussein Ali Fidow – political chief and Wasiir (Prime Minister)
- ❖ Ali Mohamud Raghe "Dheere" a.k.a. Sheikh Ali Mohamud Rage a.k.a. Sheikh Ali Dhere – current Deputy Amir. He is from Hawiye Murusade clan. Official spokesman. (Not to be confused with the Sheikh Ali Dhere who established the first Islamic court in Mogadishu in 1996).
- ❖ Aden Hashi Farah "Ayro" – central Hawiye clan (killed in U.S. airstrike in 2008.)
- ❖ Ibrahim Haji Jama Mee'aad "al-Afghani" (Abubakar al-Seyli'i) – He was Governor of the Kisimayo administration (killed by Godane loyalists in 2013.)
- ❖ Hassan Yaqub Ali – was official spokesman of the Kisimayo administration but currently he is Waali (governor) of Gal-Mudug. (Rahanwayn clan)
- ❖ Abdirahman Hassan Hussein – leader (Governor) of the Middle Shabelle region
- ❖ Hassan Abdullah Hersi "al-Turki" – leader of the Ras Kamboni Brigades, which controls the Juba Valley and was first part of Hizbul Islam but merged with al-Shabaab in 2010. (Ogaden sub-clan of Darod) (Died of natural causes in 2014.)
- ❖ Mohamed Said Atom – faction leader and arms dealer who in July 2010 announced allegiance to al-Shabaab and the al-Shabaab commander in Puntland (surrendered to Federal Government in 2014.)

- ❖ Mukhtar Abu-Muslim – head of fatwas, from Rahanweyn clan.
- ❖ Abdulahi Haji "Daud" – head of assassinations, from Hawiye clan of Murursade sub-clan.
- ❖ Sahal Isku Dhuuq – head of kidnappings of aid workers for ransom, from Dir clan of Bimaal sub-clan.
- ❖ Hassan Afrah, – head of relationship with pirates, from Hawiye clan of Saleban sub-clan.
- ❖ Dahir Gamaey "Abdi Al-Haq" – judge of Al-Shabaab, from Hawiye clan of Duduble sub-clan.
- ❖ Tahliil Abdishakur – head of the elite Al-Amniyat assassination unit (killed in U.S. drone strike in 2014).
- ❖ Yusuf Dheeq – chief of external operations and planning for intelligence and security (killed in U.S. drone strike in 2015).
- ❖ Aden Garaar – head of external operations of Al-Shabaab; reportedly orchestrated the 2013 Westgate shopping mall attack in Nairobi (killed in U.S. drone strike in 2015).
- ❖ Mohamed Musa – Gedo province commander (killed in skirmish with Somali army in 2015).
- ❖ Sheikh Abdiasis Abu Musab - military operations spokesman

Foreigners:

Al-Shabaab is said to have many foreigners within its ranks, particularly at the leadership level. Fighters from the Persian Gulf and international jihadists were called to join the holy war against the Somali government and its Ethiopian allies. Though Somali Islamists did not originally use suicide bombing tactics, the foreign elements of al-Shabaab have been blamed for several suicide bombings. A 2006 UN report identified Libya, and Egypt, among countries in the region, as the main backers of the Islamist extremists. Egypt has a longstanding policy of securing the Nile River flow by destabilizing Ethiopia.

Formerly a predominantly nationalist organization, al-Shabaab repositioned itself as a militant Islamist group that also attracted a large cadre of Western devotees. As of 2011, the group's foreign recruitment strategy was active in the United States, where members attempted to recruit from the local Muslim communities. According to an investigative report by the U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security, Al Shabaab recruited over 40 Muslim Americans since 2007. In 2010, the New York Times reported that after more than a dozen Americans were killed in Somalia, the organization's recruiting success had decreased in the US.

These American and foreign recruits played a dual role within the organization, serving as mercenaries and as a propaganda tool for radicalization and recruitment. These individuals, including Omar Hammami, appeared in propaganda videos posted in online forums to appeal to disaffected Muslim youth and inspire them to join the Islamist struggle. This was a top-down strategy, wherein Islamist agents attempted to use mosques and legitimate businesses as a cover to meet, recruit, and raise funds for operations in the US and abroad. By mid-2013, the U.S. Congress reported that such militant recruitment appeared to have halted.

Most of the foreign al-Shabaab members come from Yemen, Sudan, the Swahili Coast, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. As of 2010, their number was estimated at between 200 and 300 militants, augmented by around 1,000 diasporan ethnic Somalis. Many of Al-Shabaab's foot soldiers also belong to Somalia's marginalized ethnic minorities from the farming south.

Of the foreign members, Jonathan Evans, the former head of MI5, addressing a London security conference in 2010, advised that "a significant number of UK residents" were training with al-Shabaab. Linking this increased involvement with a reduction in Al Qaida activity in Pakistan's tribal areas, he also suggested that since Somalia, like Afghanistan, at the time had no effective central government, the presence of foreign fighters there could inspire terrorist incidents in the UK. "It is only a matter of time before we see terrorism on our streets inspired by those who are today fighting alongside al-Shabaab." The actual number has been estimated at between 50 and 100 persons; one source estimating around 60 active Al-Shabaab recruiters, including 40 Somalis and an additional 20 mainly British-based 'clean skins', individuals who have not committed any crimes but are believed to have ties with the group. There is also evidence of funding of the group by Somalis resident in Britain.

Of the ten people subject to control orders (now Tpm orders) in 2012, at least five are associated with al-Shabaab: (pseudonymously) CC, CE "a British citizen of Iranian origin, aged 28 in 2012", CF, and DD "a non-British citizen believed to have been associated with the funding and promotion of (terrorism-related activity) in East Africa." At least two British Somalis, Ibrahim Magag (referred to as BX in Court documentation) and Mohammed Ahmed Mohamed, have absconded.

In 2012, it was also reported that the group was attracting an increasing number of non-Somali recent converts from Kenya, a predominantly Christian country in the African Great Lakes region. Estimates in 2014 placed the figure of Kenyan fighters at around 25% of Al-Shabaab's total forces. Referred to as the "Kenyan Mujahideen" by Al-Shabaab's core members, the converts are typically young and overzealous. Poverty has made them easier targets for the group's recruiting activities. The Kenyan insurgents can blend in with the general population of Kenya, and they

are often harder to track by law enforcement. Reports suggest that al-Shabaab is attempting to build an even more multi-ethnic generation of fighters in the larger region. One such recent convert, who helped carry out the Kampala bombings but now cooperates with the Kenyan police, believes that the group is trying to use local Kenyans to do its "dirty work" for it, while its own core members escape unscathed. According to diplomats, Muslim areas in coastal Kenya and Tanzania, such as Mombasa and Zanzibar, are especially vulnerable for recruitment.

Foreigners from Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as Afghan-trained Somalis, play an important role in the group's leadership ranks owing to their combat experience. Bringing with them specialized skills, these commanders often lead the indoctrination of new recruits, and provide training in remote-controlled roadside bombings, suicide attack techniques, and the assassination and kidnapping of government officials, journalists, humanitarian and civil society workers.

- ❖ **Fazul Abdullah Mohammed:** Mohammed, a Kenyan national, was appointed by Osama bin Laden as Al-Qaeda's leader in East Africa in late 2009. Before the death of Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan, Mohammed served as the military operations chief for Al-Qaeda in the region. He was an experienced militant commander who was known to be able to cross national borders with ease. In August 2008, he eluded a police dragnet in Kenya. Mohammed had been hiding in Somalia with Shabaab and the Islamic Courts for years. Mohammed was considered Al-Shabaab's military leader, while Muktar Abdelrahman Abu Zubeyr was Al-Shabaab's spiritual leader. He was killed on June 8, 2011.
- ❖ **Jehad Serwan Mostafa** (alias "Ahmed Gurey", "Anwar al-Amriki" and "Emir Anwar"): a US-born senior Al-Shabaab commander. In charge of various functions for the militant group, including serving as a leader for foreign fighters within the organization as well as training insurgents. Fluent in English, Somali and Arabic, he is also a media specialist.
- ❖ **Shaykh Muhammad Abu Fa'id:** Fai'd, a Saudi citizen, serves as a top financier and a "manager" for Shabaab.
- ❖ **Abu Musa Mombasa:** Mombasa, a Pakistani citizen, serves as Shabaab's chief of security and training.
- ❖ **Abu Mansoor Al-Amriki:** Amriki, whose real name was Omar Hammami, was a U.S. citizen who converted to Islam and traveled to Somalia in 2006. Once in Somalia, he quickly rose through the ranks. He served as a military commander, recruiter, financier, and propagandist. Amriki appeared in several Shabaab propaganda tapes. He became a primary recruiter for Al Shabaab; issued written statements on their behalf and appeared in its propaganda videos and audio recordings. An indictment unsealed in August 2010 charged him with providing material support to terrorists. In January 2013, Amriki was ousted from al-Shabaab because it felt he had joined in a "narcissistic pursuit of fame". He then publicly voiced ideological differences with the group via YouTube and Twitter, asserting that local militant leaders were only concerned with fighting in Somalia and not globally. He was assassinated by the insurgents in September 2013. He was removed from the

FBI's Most Wanted Terrorists list in November 2013. He was removed from the US State Department's Rewards for Justice list in January 2014

- ❖ Abdulkadir Mohamed Abdulkadir ("Ikrima"): a Kenya-born Somali Al-Shabaab commander alleged by the Kenyan government to have planned several attacks in the country, including a plot to target the UN's bureau in Nairobi, the Kenyan parliamentary building, and an Ethiopian restaurant patronized by Somali government representatives. According to US officials, Abdulkadir was also a close associate of the late Al-Qaeda operatives Harun Fazul and Saleh Nabhan.
- ❖ Mahmud Mujajir: Mujajir, a Sudanese citizen, is Shabaab's chief of recruitment for suicide bombers.
- ❖ Samantha Lewthwaite: Allegedly an Al-Shabaab member, she is believed to have been behind an attack on a sports bar in Mombasa in 2012. Widow of 7/7 suicide bomber Germaine Lindsay.
- ❖ Issa Osman Issa: Issa serves as a top al-Qaeda recruiter and military strategist for Shabaab. Before joining, he participated in the simultaneous attacks on the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998. He has been described as a central player in the simultaneous attacks on the Paradise Hotel in Kikambala, Kenya, in 2002, and the attempt that year to down an Israeli airliner in Mombasa.
- ❖ Mohamed Mohamud, also known as Sheikh Dulayadayn, Gamadhare or Mohamed Kuno, a Kenyan citizen of Somali origin who served as a commander of Al-Shabaab operations in Kenya. Named by the Kenyan government as the mastermind behind the Garissa University College attack. He was killed alongside 16 other militants in an overnight raid by Somali forces on June 1, 2016.

Relations with other militants groups:

Al-Qaeda

On February 9, 2012, Mukhtar Abu al-Zubair 'Godane' announced in a fifteen-minute video message that Al-Shabaab would be joining the militant Islamist organization al-Qaeda, under the leadership of Ayman al-Zawahiri. Al-Zubair stated, "On behalf of the soldiers and the commanders in al-Shabaab, we pledge allegiance to you. So lead us to the path of jihad and martyrdom that was drawn by our imam, the martyr Osama." Al-Zawahiri approved and welcomed Al-Shabaab as al-Qaeda's Somalia-based affiliate in a 15-minute video response, stating "Today, I have glad tidings for the Muslim Ummah that will please the believers and disturb the disbelievers, which is the joining of the Shabaab

al-Mujahideen Movement in Somalia to Qaeda al-Jihad, to support the jihadi unity against the Zio-Crusader campaign and their assistants amongst the treacherous agent rulers." The merger follows reports about a rift in the leadership, and it coincides with reports about large factions breaking away from Al Shabaab, and up to 500 Al Shabaab fighters fleeing or leaving southern Somalia for Yemen, where a full Al Qaeda branch AQAP is stepping up operations, under perceived increased military pressure since a new president took office. Somalia's Transitional Federal Government officially recognized the two Islamist groups as one group.

A poll conducted between 8–16 April 2012, by the international market research company, YouGov examined the views of MENA region residents with regard to the news of the merger. The combined group evoked fear in most respondents, with 42% believing that the merger announcement ought to be a source of alarm for the international community; 23% of polltakers felt very strongly about this. 45% of respondents believed that the fusion of the two groups would enhance Al-Qaeda's attempts at recruiting new operatives, with 12% indicating that the merger would strengthen the latter group's capabilities and another 11% believing that it would result in more terrorist attacks on the continent. A further 55% of pollsters did not know how the Somalian leadership would respond to news of the merger, though 36% suggested that it would lead to more movements against Al-Shabaab by the Somalian military. 34% of respondents also indicated that announcement of the merger constituted a propaganda effort aimed at securing more coverage for the two Islamist groups, with 30% of polltakers believing that the decision to merge shows that both Al-Shabaab and Al-Qaeda are under duress.

In response to Godane's announced name change and merger with al-Qaeda, all other Shabaab top leaders called a conference in Baidabo. They refused to adopt the new name (al-Qaeda in East Africa) and they agreed on a new policy, focusing entirely on domestic issues and with no mention any more of international struggle. One significant policy proposal was to form a national, independent Shura of Islamic clerics, which means also independent of al-Qaeda. With it, they seem to try to remove some obstacles for reaching an entente with their Sufi opponents, and to avoid getting targeted by US drones. Aweys later declared that: "Al-Shabaab and al-Qaeda are merely a small part of the larger Islamic group and al-Qaeda's ideology should not be viewed as the sole, righteous path for Islam."

This open revolt against al-Qaeda made it more likely that Al-Shabaab would slowly become ready for some sort of negotiated entente. On February 23, 2012, while Shabaab was pushed out of several strongholds, Radio Magadishu reported that 120 al-Qaeda leaders and followers fled from Kismayo to Yemen. Aweys was appointed military commander of Kismayo and the south.

By 2013, the internal rifts within Al-Shabaab erupted into all-out warfare between Godane's faction and those of other leaders in the organization. In late June, four senior Shabaab commanders were executed under the orders of Godane. One of these commanders was Ibrahim al-Afghani, who had complained about the leadership style of Godane in a letter to Ayman al-Zawahiri. Sixteen others were arrested, and Aweys fled. He was later taken into custody in Mogadishu by Somali government forces. On 12 September, Omar Hammami, who had left the group due to significant disagreements with Godane, was killed by Al-Shabaab forces. The Westgate shopping mall shooting in September was said by Simon Tisdall to be a reflection of the power struggle within the insurgent group, with Godane's hardline global jihadi faction seeking to exert its authority.

AQIM and Boko Haram

According to U.S. Army General Carter Ham, Al-Shabaab, Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Nigeria-based Boko Haram (BH) were as of June 2012 attempting to synchronize and coordinate their activities in terms of sharing funds, training and explosives. Ham added that he believed that the collaboration presented a threat to both U.S. homeland security and the local authorities. However, according to counter-terrorism specialist Rick Nelson with the Washington-based Center for Strategic International Studies, there was little evidence that the three groups were targeting U.S. areas, as each was primarily interested in establishing fundamentalist administrations in their respective regions. In May 2014, Senior Al-Shabab member Fuad Shongole stated that al-Shabab fighters would carry out jihad, or holy war, in Kenya and Uganda "and afterward, with God's will, to America."

Hizbul Islam

On September 24, 2012, Hizbul Islam spokesman Mohamed Moallim announced that his group was discontinuing its association with Al-Shabaab, a group that he asserted his organization had only nominally united with. Moallim cited the significant political changes happening in Somalia as well as Al-Shabaab's reported issuance of propaganda against Hizbul Islam as the primary reasons for his group's decision to leave the coalition. He added that his organization did not share Al-Shabaab's political philosophy, and that he felt the militant group had been considerably "weakened". Moallim also indicated that Hizbul Islam was open to talks with any political actors in the country working for a common good

Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

Starting in early 2015, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) released a series of videos online aimed at al-Shabaab, calling on the group to switch allegiances from al-Qaeda to ISIL's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. By September 2015, Al-Shabab issued an internal memo aimed at pro-ISIL elements in its ranks, stating that the group's policy is to continue its allegiance to al-Qaida, and banned any discussion relating to ISIL. The group also detained some of its fighters who had voiced support for ISIL.

In October 2015, senior al-Shabaab commander Abdul Qadir Mumin and approximately 20 of his followers in the Puntland region pledged allegiance to ISIL. Further defections in al-Shabaab ranks occurred in the border region between Somalia and Northern Kenya. In November 2015, a pro-ISIL commander called Hussein Abdi Gedi was ambushed and killed, and at least 9 al-Shabaab fighters were killed in fighting between the two factions. The head of al-Shabab in the Lower Shabelle region, Abu Abdalla, gave an interview in which he said that all pro-ISIL members should leave the group or be killed.

Campaign of violence:

While Al-Shabaab previously represented the hard-line militant youth movement within the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), it is now described as an extremist splinter group of the ICU. Since the ICU's downfall, however, the distinction between the youth movement and the so-called successor organization to the ICU, the PRM, appears to have been blurred. Al-Shabaab had recently begun encouraging people from across society, including elders, to join their ranks. In February 2012, Fu'ad Mohamed Khalaf Shongole, the chief of awareness raising of al-Shabaab, said that "At this stage of the jihad, fathers and mothers must send their unmarried girls to fight alongside the (male) militants". The addition of elders and young girls marks a change in the movement, which had previously involved only men, particularly young boys.

Their core consisted of veterans who had fought and defeated the secular Mogadishu faction leaders of the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism (ARPCT) at the Second Battle of Mogadishu. Their origins are not clearly known, but former members say Hizbul Shabaab was founded as early as 2004. The membership of Al-Shabaab also includes various foreign fighters from around the world, according to an Islamic hardliner Mukhtar Robow "Abu Manssor".

In January 2009, Ethiopian forces withdrew from Somalia and Al-Shabaab carried on its fight against former ally and Islamic Courts Union leader, President Sharif Ahmed, who was the head of the Transitional Federal Government. Al-Shabaab saw some success in its campaigns against the weak Transitional Federal Government, capturing Baidoa, the base of the Transitional Federal Parliament, on January 26, 2009, and killing three ministers of the government in a December 3, 2009 suicide bomb attack on a medical school graduation ceremony.

Before the drought in 2010, Somalia, including the Al-Shabaab controlled areas, had its best crop yield in seven years. Al-Shabaab claimed some credit for the success, saying that their reduction of oversized cheap food imports allowed Somalia's own grain production, which normally has high potential, to flourish. They asserted that this policy had the effect of shifting income from urban to rural areas, from mid-income groups to low-income groups, and from overseas farmers to local farmers. However, in response to the drought, Al-Shabaab announced in July 2011 that it had withdrawn its restrictions on international humanitarian workers.

In 2011, according to the head of the U.N.'s counter-piracy division, Colonel John Steed, Al-Shabaab increasingly sought to cooperate with other criminal organizations and pirate gangs in the face of dwindling funds and resources. Steed, however, acknowledged that he had no definite proof of operational ties between the Islamist militants and the pirates. Detained pirates also indicated to UNODC officials that some measure of cooperation on their part with Al-Shabaab militants was necessary, as they have increasingly launched maritime raids from areas in southern Somalia controlled by the insurgent group. Al-Shabaab members have also extorted the pirates, demanding protection money from them and forcing seized pirate gang leaders in Harardhere to hand over 20% of future ransom proceeds.

Despite routinely expelling, attacking and harassing aid workers, Al-Shabaab permits some agencies to work in areas under its control. At the height of its territorial control it implemented a system of aid agency regulation, taxation and surveillance. Where agencies are allowed to operate, this is often due to the desire of Al-Shabaab to coopt and materially and politically benefit from the provision of aid and services. Senior aid agency representatives often strongly rejected claims that they talked with Al-Shabaab, while aid workers working in Al-Shabaab controlled areas often reported they directly negotiated with the group out of necessity.

Al-Shabaab was known as the most prominent terrorist-organization in Somalia which was succeeded to clear away from the bigger cities of the state by the end of 2013. While Al-Shabaab has been reduced in power and size since the beginning of the Kenya Army's Operation Linda Nchi southern incursion, the group has continued its efforts at recruitment and territorial control. The group maintains training camps in areas near

Kismayo in the southern regions of Somalia. One such camp was constructed in Laanta Bur village near Afgooye, which is also where the former K-50 airport is located. On July 11, 2012, Somali federal troops and their AMISOM allies captured the area from the militants.

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