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UPDATE**

Somalia, August 24, 2023

DAILY SITUATION UPDATE

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As operations against Al-Shabaab in rural areas intensify, the extremist group typically carries out more frequent attacks in the capital city of Mogadishu to make up for their losses. Therefore, it is likely that there will be a rise in the number of attacks in the near to mid future as the operations against the group continue.

Somalia engaged in various political and security developments recently. In terms of foreign affairs, Somalia's Foreign Affairs Minister, Abshir Huruse, participated in the BRICS Summit Gala Dinner in South Africa to strengthen cooperation between Somalia and South Africa within the BRICS alliance. Meanwhile, Mahamuud Moallim, Commissioner of the Somali Disaster Management Authority, led a high-level meeting to coordinate aid efforts in areas that have been liberated from the control of the extremist group Al-Shabaab. This meeting involved officials from the Prime Minister's office, international donors, and Islamic humanitarian organisations.

Another significant event was the consultative meetings among senior officials from the African Union (AU), Somalia, and the United Nations focused on discussing the second phase of troop reduction in Somalia. The African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) plans to decrease its troop presence by 3,000 personnel in September.

Additionally, Sheikh Yusuf Ali Aynte, the Chairperson of the Somali Scholars Association, held discussions with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, aiming to enhance Al-Azhar's academic and Da'wah support for the Somali people.

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of Somalia engaged with members of the Women's Association in Dhusamareb, urging Somali women to actively participate in the fight against Al-Shabaab and support the armed forces.

However, internal conflicts persist within Somalia. SSC-Khaatumo, a political entity, reported continued fighting in Laascaanood and accused Somaliland of initiating a major attack. These conflicts underscore the ongoing divisions and tensions between different political groups in the country.

The Federal Government of Somalia announced a ban on TikTok, Telegram, and the betting website 1XBet due to concerns about "indecent content" and terrorist propaganda. However, the State of Puntland refused to enforce the ban, signalling disagreements and challenges regarding the implementation of government policies.

In terms of security, the Somali National Army achieved a significant victory by liberating Da' Village in the Galgudud region from Al-Shabaab militants.

The government inaugurated Turkish-trained military officers and deputy officers, emphasising the importance of this induction in the fight against extremist elements. The

Somali government expresses its commitment to countering insurgency and strengthening national security, acknowledging the support received from the Turkish government.

Security threats from Daesh (ISIS) led to the temporary closure of prominent businesses in Bosaso, resulting in substantial financial losses. Discussions are underway to address ongoing challenges and mitigate the impact of such security threats in the region.

In a separate incident, a clash occurred between traditional elders in Hargeisa, resulting in injuries and arrests. This incident highlights the volatility and potential for violence in certain areas of Somalia.

On a positive note, a group of 350 Somali men and women, trained through a U.S.-supported program, are being deployed in the fight against Al-Shabaab with the support of the Danab Brigade. This indicates international efforts to combat extremism and support the Somali military.

Challenges remain in the sustainability of the current security approach as Al-Shabaab continues to recapture previously liberated areas, such as the recent recapture of the Ruun-Nirgood district.

In terms of internal governance and transparency, a whistle-blower from Somalia's Auditor General's Office exposed alleged deceit, corruption, and abuse of power within the institution. This raises concerns about corruption and the lack of transparency within Somalia's institutions as a whole.

SUMMARY

Politics: Somalia's Foreign Affairs Minister, Abshir Huruse, took part in the BRICS Summit Gala Dinner in Johannesburg, South Africa, with the objective of strengthening cooperation between Somalia and South Africa within the BRICS alliance. Meanwhile, Mahamuud Moallim, Commissioner of the Somali Disaster Management Authority (SoDMA), led a high-level meeting to coordinate aid efforts in areas liberated from Al-Shabaab's control. This meeting involved officials from the Prime Minister's office, international donors, and Islamic humanitarian organisations. Another significant event was the consultative meetings among senior officials from the African Union (AU), Somalia, and the United Nations, focused on discussing the second phase of troop reduction in Somalia. The AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) plans to decrease its troop presence by 3,000 personnel in September. Additionally, the Chairperson of the Somali Scholars Association (SSA), Sheikh Yusuf Ali Aynte, had discussions with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, HE Prof. Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, aiming to enhance Al-Azhar's academic and Da'wah (Islamic outreach) support for the Somali people. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of Somalia met with members of the Women's Association in Dhusamareb, urging Somali women to actively participate in the fight against Al-Shabaab and support the armed forces. However, internal conflicts persisted within Somalia, as SSC-Khaatumo, a political entity, reported continued fighting in Laascaanood, accusing Somaliland of initiating a major attack. The Federal Government of Somalia also

announced a ban on TikTok, Telegram, and the betting website 1XBet, citing concerns about "indecent content" and terrorist propaganda, but it faced opposition with the State of Puntland refusing to enforce the ban. Lastly, tensions arose between Villa Somalia and Puntland concerning claims on Garacad Port, with a prominent traditional leader from Puntland highlighting the historical conflicts in Somalia and the suffering endured by the people of Puntland.

Key Takeaways:

1. On August 24, 2023, Somalia's Foreign Affairs Minister, Abshir Huruse, attended the BRICS Summit Gala Dinner in Johannesburg, South Africa, aiming to strengthen collaboration between Somalia and South Africa within the BRICS alliance.
2. Mahamuud Moallim, the Commissioner of the Somali Disaster Management Authority (SoDMA), led a high-level meeting to coordinate aid efforts for areas liberated from Al-Shabaab's control. The meeting involved officials from the Prime Minister's office, international donors, and Islamic humanitarian organizations.
3. Consultative meetings were held among senior officials from the African Union (AU), Somalia, and the United Nations to discuss the second phase of troop drawdown in Somalia. The AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) plans to reduce its troop numbers by 3,000 personnel in September.
4. The Chairperson of the Somali Scholars Association (SSA), Sheikh Yusuf Ali Aynte, met with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, HE Prof. Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, to discuss enhancing Al-Azhar's academic and Da'wah support for the Somali people.
5. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of Somalia engaged in a meeting with members of the Women's Association in Dhusamareb, urging Somali women to actively participate in the fight against Al-Shabaab and support the armed forces.
6. SSC-Khaatumo, a political entity within Somalia, reported ongoing conflict in Laascaanood, accusing Somaliland of launching a major attack. Detailed information about casualties and the extent of the fighting was not provided in the statement.
7. The Federal Government of Somalia announced a ban on TikTok, Telegram, and the betting website 1XBet, citing concerns about "indecent content" and terrorist propaganda. The ban faced opposition, with the State of Puntland refusing to implement it.
8. Tensions between Villa Somalia and Puntland were displayed on social media regarding claims on Garacad Port. A prominent traditional leader from Puntland, Nabadoon Cabdicasiis aw-Yusuf Xaarin, reflected on the history of conflict in Somalia, emphasizing the suffering endured by the people of Puntland.

Security: The Somali National Army has achieved a significant victory by liberating Da' Village in the Galgudud region from Al-Shabaab militants. This successful operation not only highlights the effectiveness of the mission but also ensures the safety of local residents without any casualties among the national heroes involved. This milestone marks a major step towards eradicating Al-Shabaab's presence in the Galmudug area. Concurrently, the Prime Minister of the Federal Government of Somalia inaugurated Turkish-trained military officers and deputy officers, emphasizing the importance of this induction in the fight against extremist elements. The government expressed its commitment to counter the insurgency and strengthen national security, acknowledging the support received from the Turkish government. However, security threats from Daesh (ISIS) have led to temporary closures of prominent businesses in Bosaso, causing significant financial losses while discussions are underway to address ongoing challenges in the region. In a separate incident, a clash occurred between traditional elders in Hargeisa, resulting in one individual being injured and the other being arrested, reminiscent of a previous altercation involving the same individual. On a positive note, a group of 350 Somali men and women, trained through a U.S.-supported program, are being deployed in the fight against Al-Shabaab with the support of the Danab Brigade. While the Somali government aims to weaken the insurgent group, challenges related to clan dynamics and the sustainability of the current approach persist. Al-Shabaab continues to exhibit a pattern of recapturing previously liberated areas, such as the recent recapture of the Ruun-Nirgood district, despite initial successes in liberating them. In Mogadishu, confusion arises among police officers due to an unexpected deduction of \$5 from their monthly payments, prompting a need for clarification. The SCC-Khatumo administration announced the capture of the Maraaga area from the Somaliland army in Las Anod, accusing the Somaliland administration of destruction and capturing prisoners and equipment, although no official response has been made by the Somaliland government. Authorities in the Banaadir region have announced plans to intensify security operations and house searches to counter the threats posed by Al-Shabaab, aiming to strengthen security in Mogadishu while respecting citizen rights and avoiding unnecessary disturbance or privacy violations. Lastly, a significant whistle-blower from Somalia's Auditor General's Office has exposed alleged deceit, corruption, and abuse of power within the institution, raising concerns about corruption and lack of transparency within Somalia's institutions overall.

Key Takeaways:

1. The Somali National Army achieved a significant victory in the Galgudud region by liberating Da' Village from Al-Shabaab militants. The operation was executed without any casualties among the national heroes involved, highlighting the effectiveness of the mission and the safety of local residents. This victory marks a major step towards eradicating Al-Shabaab's presence in Galmudug.
2. On the same day, the Prime Minister of the Federal Government of Somalia inaugurated military officers and deputy officers of the Turkish-trained Somali National Army. The Prime Minister emphasized the significance of this induction during the country's fight against extremist elements and commended the Turkish government for its support. The

government expressed its commitment to countering the Khawarij insurgency and strengthening national security.

3. In Bosaso, Somalia, several prominent businesses temporarily closed due to security concerns following threats from the militant group Daesh (ISIS). The closure was a precautionary measure to protect employees and assets. These businesses faced significant daily revenue losses while seeking discussions to address ongoing challenges in the region.
4. In Hargeisa, a clash occurred between two traditional elders resulting in Sultan Mahad Aresh being injured by Sultan Habar. Sultan Habar was subsequently arrested, and Sultan Aresh received medical treatment. This incident bears similarities to a previous altercation involving Sultan Habar and a member of the Somaliland House of Representatives, where Sultan Habar also caused injury.
5. A group of 350 Somali men and women, trained through a U.S.-supported program, prepared to be deployed in the fight against al-Shabaab. Led by the Danab Brigade, these soldiers are equipped to combat various challenges posed by the insurgent group. The Somali government aims to weaken al-Shabaab's hold with the support of these and other forces, despite challenges related to clan dynamics and the sustainability of the current approach. The United States continues to support the offensive and prepare for possible defections from within al-Shabaab.
6. On August 23, 2023, al-Shabaab recaptured the Ruun-Nirgood district in the Middle Shabelle region after the Somali National Army and Ma'awisley militia withdrew without resistance. This reflects a recurring pattern of successfully liberating areas but struggling to maintain control and governance due to challenges in providing basic provisions, building trust, and local sympathies or cooperation with al-Shabaab.
7. Police officers in Mogadishu, Somalia, noticed an unexpected deduction of \$5 in their monthly payments. The reason for the deduction remains unclear, causing confusion and a seek for clarification among the officers.
8. The SCC-Khatumo administration announced the capture of the Maraaga area from the Somaliland army in the disputed town of Las Anod. The SCC forces accused the Somaliland administration of causing destruction and captured prisoners and equipment. The Somaliland government has not officially responded to these claims of victory by the SCC-Khatumo administration.
9. The authorities in the Banaadir region announced their intention to intensify security operations and house searches to counter the threats posed by Al-Shabaab. They aim to strengthen security in Mogadishu by conducting comprehensive searches and inspections in areas at risk while ensuring citizen rights and avoiding unnecessary disturbance or privacy violations.

10. A whistle-blower from Somalia's Auditor General's Office exposed alleged deceit, corruption, and abuse of power within the institution. The newly appointed Auditor General was accused of manipulating audit results, engaging in clandestine dealings, and favouring individuals based on clan and political affiliations. These allegations raise concerns about corruption and lack of transparency within Somalia's institutions.

EVENTS LISTED

Politics

On August 24, 2023, **Somalia's Foreign Affairs Minister, Abshir Huruse, attended the BRICS Summit Gala Dinner held in Johannesburg, South Africa.** The event, hosted by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, aimed to facilitate bilateral discussions, and strengthen collaboration between Somalia and South Africa. As part of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) Summit, the dinner brought together leaders from the member nations to engage in in-depth conversations on various areas of mutual interest, including trade, investment, security, and cultural exchange. President Ramaphosa expressed optimism regarding increased cooperation between Somalia and South Africa, emphasizing the importance of working together to address common challenges and leverage opportunities for economic growth. Both Somalia and South Africa recognize the significance of robust international partnerships in achieving their respective developmental goals, and this gala dinner provided a platform for leaders to exchange ideas and explore avenues for closer collaboration. The discussions echoed the theme of unity and cooperation, which are central to the BRICS alliance.

On August 24, 2023, **Mahamuud Moallim, the Commissioner of the Somali Disaster Management Authority (SoDMA), led a high-level meeting aimed at coordinating aid efforts for areas recently freed from the control of Al-Shabaab.** The meeting brought together officials from the Prime Minister's office, international donors, and Islamic humanitarian organizations, highlighting a united front in addressing the urgent humanitarian needs in the newly liberated regions. With the protracted battle between the government of Somalia and Al-Shabaab, the aftermath of the liberation has revealed the dire condition of these areas, necessitating swift and targeted relief efforts. Commissioner Mahamuud Moallim emphasized the importance of collaborative efforts and facilitated discussions to coordinate resources and streamline aid distribution. SoDMA unveiled a comprehensive emergency response plan to deliver urgent medical and food aid to areas experiencing ongoing offensives against Al-Shabaab. The involvement of diverse stakeholders underscored the commitment to collaborate and stabilize the liberated areas. Commissioner Mahamuud Moallim expressed gratitude for the support of international donors and humanitarian organizations, highlighting their contributions in ensuring the success of emergency relief efforts.

On August 24, 2023, **senior officials from the African Union (AU), Somalia, and the United Nations began consultative meetings to discuss the second phase of the troop drawdown in Somalia. The AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) plans to further**

reduce its troop numbers by 3,000 personnel in September. This follows a successful withdrawal of 2,000 troops and the handover of six military bases in June. Mohammed El-Amine Souef, the special representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission for Somalia and head of the ATMIS, emphasized the need for careful planning and coordination during the drawdown process to safeguard the progress achieved thus far. A joint technical committee consisting of representatives from ATMIS, the Somali government, and the UN Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) has been working to identify the military bases from which the troops will be withdrawn. During the meeting, UN representative Aisa Kirabo Kacyira highlighted the importance of considering lessons learned from the first phase of the drawdown to ensure the success of the second phase. The UN will be responsible for ensuring that the equipment and facilities handed over to the Somali security forces by departing ATMIS troops are in good condition and that the Somali forces are trained in their use. The second phase of the drawdown is being evaluated in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions, with a technical assessment to be conducted by the end of August and an update on preparations due by September 15. The drawdowns are mandated by resolutions requiring the gradual transfer of security responsibilities to Somali security forces prior to ATMIS' exit from Somalia on December 31, 2024. Somalia's National Security Adviser, Hussein Sheikh Ali, expressed gratitude for the continued support of the AU and UNSOS and reiterated the government's commitment to a successful handover of security responsibilities when ATMIS completes its mission in December 2024.

On August 24, 2023, **the Chairperson of the Somali Scholars Association (SSA), Sheikh Yusuf Ali Aynte, met with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, HE Prof. Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, at the Al-Azhar Headquarters.** The purpose of the meeting was to discuss ways to enhance Al-Azhar's academic and Da'wah support for the Somali people. During the meeting, the Grand Imam reaffirmed Al-Azhar's unwavering support for Somalia and expressed full solidarity with the Somali people in the face of ongoing crises and challenges. Al-Tayyeb highlighted that Al-Azhar currently hosts around 1,200 Somali students studying at both Al-Azhar University and Al-Azhar Institutes. Additionally, the institution offers 70 annual scholarships to Somali students at various educational stages within Al-Azhar. The Grand Imam expressed a willingness to further increase the number of scholarships provided to support Somalia, aiming to contribute to the elimination of internal challenges and the stability of Somali society. Sheikh Aynte, in turn, expressed his pleasure at meeting the Grand Imam and expressed his deep appreciation for the extensive support Al-Azhar provides to the Muslim community, particularly the Somalis. He emphasized the pride the Somalis feel in Al-Azhar Ash-Sharif as a renowned educational institution and a destination for knowledge seekers and scholars. Sheikh Aynte also noted that Al-Azhar serves as a source of pride for the entire Muslim nation due to its educational approach characterised by integrity and moderation.

On August 24, 2023, **President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of Somalia engaged in a meeting with members of the Women's Association in Dhusamareb, alongside Galmudug President Ahmed Qorqor.** The president encouraged Somali women to actively participate in the fight against the extremist group Al-Shabaab and to lend support to the armed forces. Their involvement could entail raising public awareness about the ongoing battle against Al-Shabaab and urging the general populace to stand against the group, which

continues to pose a significant challenge to the government's efforts towards Somalia's liberation. During the meeting, the women representatives shared their perspectives on combating Al-Shabaab and pledged unwavering support to their sons serving on the frontlines. President Mohamud has been present in Dhusamareb for three weeks, aiming to expedite the campaign against Al-Shabaab as the Somali National Army (SNA) nears the conclusion of the initial phase in Galmudug. In August 2022, President Mohamud initiated a comprehensive offensive against Al-Shabaab, beginning with concentrated efforts in the central regions of Hirshabelle and Galmudug. The Somali forces partnered with local clans that had rebelled against Al-Shabaab, thereby diminishing the group's public support in those areas. Al-Shabaab's implementation of burdensome taxes on residents to cope with economic hardship and natural disasters had further eroded their favorability. Notably, the initial phase proved highly effective, as it expelled Al-Shabaab from regions it had controlled for over a decade. Subsequently, in March 2023, the government commenced phase two, targeting Al-Shabaab in the southern regions.

On August 24, 2023, **SSC-Khaatumo, a political entity within Somalia, released an official statement reporting an ongoing conflict in the city of Laascaanood, located in the Sool region.** According to the press release, SSC-Khaatumo accused Somaliland of launching a major attack on Laascaanood. The news release did not provide detailed information regarding casualties or the extent of the fighting. In addition, it mentioned that the Somaliland forces deployed tanks and artillery in various areas near Maraag, and claimed victory in those areas. However, no verifiable information on casualties or specific events was provided in the statement.

On August 24, 2023, **the Federal Government of Somalia announced a ban on popular internet platforms TikTok, Telegram, and the betting website 1XBet.** The government claimed that the ban was necessary to curb the dissemination of "indecent content" and terrorist propaganda. However, experts argue that the ban is unconstitutional as it lacks support in Somalia's Constitution. They point out that the government's justification based on Article 10, which addresses human dignity, is irrelevant to the directive. The ban has also faced opposition, with the State of Puntland refusing to implement it and stating that the government in Mogadishu cannot enforce it upon them. Critics have raised questions about the ban's real intentions, as it is unlikely to effectively combat terrorist propaganda.

On August 24, 2023, **tensions between Villa Somalia and Puntland were displayed on social media regarding claims on Garacad Port.** Amidst this strained situation, Nabadoon Cabdicasiis aw-Yusuf Xaarin, a prominent traditional leader from Puntland, reflected on the history of conflict in Somalia. He recalled the devastating impact of the civil war, recounting the atrocities committed, including massacres, rape, looting, and the destruction of cities, mainly targeting the people of Puntland. According to Xaarin, the people of Puntland have endured the brunt of violence and suffering, with their towns completely demolished and overrun by tanks. He further asserted that the people of Puntland have experienced a larger share of massacres and wealth plunder than any other Somali clan. Despite the ongoing accusations against Puntland, Xaarin explains their silence throughout the years, alluding to the responsibility of those who have now accused them.

Security

On August 24, 2023, **the Somali National Army achieved a significant milestone in the ongoing anti-Al-Shabaab campaign by liberating Da' Village in the El-Bur District of the Galgudud Region.** This victory was the result of careful planning and weeks of strategic preparations, culminating in the expulsion of Al-Shabaab militants from the area and ensuring the safety of local residents. No casualties were reported among the brave national heroes who executed the operation, highlighting the efficiency and effectiveness of the mission. The successful capture of Da' Village marks a major step towards eradicating Al-Shabaab's presence in Galmudug. The national army employed a methodical approach, gradually encircling the town and gaining control over neighbouring locations, setting the stage for the final offensive.

On August 24, 2023, **the Somali National Army (SNA) achieved a significant victory in the Galgudud region by taking control of the village of Da'.** The operation, aimed at countering the presence of Al-Shabaab militants, was successfully carried out. Without any casualties among the participating SNA soldiers, the village was fully secured, and the residents can now live in a safer environment. This operation is considered a major advancement in the efforts to eliminate the remaining Al-Shabaab forces in the Galmudug region. Da' is situated approximately 18 kilometres from the town of El-Bur, indicating that the SNA is making progress towards advancing on El-Bur town.

On August 24, 2023, **the Prime Minister of the Federal Government of Somalia, Hamse Abdi Barre, inaugurated military officers and deputy officers of the Turkish-trained Somali National Army at the Turkish-Somali Military Training Academy.** The Prime Minister, speaking at the ceremony, emphasised the significance of this induction during a critical period of the country's fight against extremist elements and the importance of defending the nation. He expressed his commitment to ensuring a swift military response and the preparedness of both the government and the people in countering the Khawarij insurgency. Prime Minister Hamse also commended the efforts of the Turkish government in supporting Somalia and particularly acknowledged the aid provided through the X.D.S military trainers. He extended gratitude for the dedication of the armed forces in their ongoing mission and encouraged them to persevere in their fight against insurgency while reaffirming the government's commitment to accountability, restructuring, and the strengthening of national security.

On August 24, 2023, **several prominent businesses in the city of Bosaso, Somalia, reportedly closed their doors temporarily due to security concerns following threats from the militant group Daesh (ISIS).** Companies such as Towfiiq, Gufurre, Horseed, and Oomaar, major players in the local trade industry, have taken precautionary measures by suspending their operations and seeking discussions to address the ongoing challenges faced by their businesses in Boosaaso. The affected businesses have indicated that their closure decision was prompted by the need to ensure the safety of their employees and assets. According to reports, the affected companies are estimated to be losing substantial daily revenues amounting to tens of thousands of dollars. In a separate incident that took place in

April, armed individuals targeted the Al-Macruuf and Fadhisame companies, leading to the loss of two lives and significant damage to the businesses.

On August 24, 2023, **in Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland, a clash occurred between two well-respected traditional elders, Sultan Saleban Boqor Osman, also known as "Habar," and Sultan Aresh.** The altercation resulted in the injury of Sultan Mahad Aresh after Sultan Habar shot a bullet into his leg following an argument. Promptly, police forces intervened and arrested Sultan Habar at the scene, while the wounded elder was taken to a medical facility for necessary treatment. It is worth noting that this incident bears similarities to a previous event in which Sultan Habar injured Guruuje, a member of the Somaliland House of Representatives, during a confrontation involving the use of a stick. Sultan Habar is widely recognized in Somaliland for his strong and eloquent speech when addressing the media.

On August 24, 2023, **a group of 350 Somali men and women who graduated from a U.S.-supported training program prepared to be deployed in the fight against al-Shabab, one of al-Qaeda's most profitable terror affiliates.** Equipped to combat guerrilla tactics, the recruits are trained to face various challenges posed by the insurgent group, including improvised explosive devices, truck bombs, rocket-propelled grenades, and suicide bombers. Led by the Danab Brigade, an elite strike force trained by U.S. troops and contractors, these soldiers are determined to defeat the enemy and make progress in eradicating al-Shabab. The training program, which recruits individuals from impoverished communities, offers them employment and financial incentives. The Danab Brigade, despite having limited training compared to U.S. special forces, has been at the forefront of Somalia's fight against al-Shabab for nearly a decade. The Somali government, backed by the Danab and other forces, aims to weaken al-Shabab's grip, reclaiming territories and gaining ground in an offensive that has lasted almost a year. The government hopes to bring about an "Anbar Awakening" moment like the one in Iraq, promoting unity and potentially leading to negotiations with a stronger position. Nevertheless, challenges remain in terms of clan dynamics, coordination between the Somali National Army and clan militias, and the sustainability of the current approach. The United States continues to support the offensive, focusing on targeting al-Shabab's core areas and facilitating self-reliance for the Somali forces. Efforts also include preparing for possible defections from within al-Shabab. However, experts' express concerns about the lack of a clear path forward and the long-term viability of the government's strategy in diminishing al-Shabab as an existential threat. Despite these challenges, the offensive represents a significant push to weaken al-Shabab's hold and create a more secure future for Somalia.

On August 23, 2023, **the militant group al-Shabaab recaptured the Ruun-Nirgood district in Somalia's Middle Shabelle region.** The Somali National Army (SNA) and Ma'awisley militia, who had taken control of the district two weeks prior, reportedly withdrew without putting up a fight. The government had presented the initial capture of Ruun-Nirgood as a significant achievement in its ongoing anti-al-Shabaab campaign. However, experts have warned about the challenges of maintaining control and governance in the area. It has now become evident that the government forces were unable to sustain their presence and administer the district effectively. Local sources revealed that the soldiers

stationed in Ruun-Nirgood lacked basic provisions, including drinking water, and faced challenges in building trust and collaboration with the local population. This, coupled with the locals' sympathies or cooperation with al-Shabaab, contributed to the group's swift recapture of the district. This event reflects a recurring pattern in the region, where government forces and allied militias have succeeded in liberating Ruun-Nirgood in the past but have struggled to maintain control, leading to its subsequent recapture by al-Shabaab.

On August 24, 2023, **an unexpected deduction of \$5 was noticed in the monthly payment received by police officers in Mogadishu, Somalia.** The reduced amount of \$196.6 raised concerns among the ranks as it deviated from the usual payment of \$199. The reasons behind this deduction remain unclear, leaving officers puzzled and seeking clarification. Notably, in 2023, 8,167 Somali police officers were registered in Mogadishu.

On August 24, 2023, **the SCC-Khatumo administration announced the capture of the Maraaga area from the Somaliland army in the disputed town of Las Anod.** The SCC forces accused the Somaliland administration of indiscriminately shelling Las Anod and causing destruction to vital civilian infrastructure. According to the SCC, the Somaliland army launched an assault from the east and west sides of Las Anod, but the SCC-Khatumo defence forces successfully repelled the attack and captured prisoners and technical equipment. The Somaliland government has not officially responded to these claims of victory by the SCC-Khatumo administration. It is worth mentioning that the recent clashes in Las Anod on Tuesday resulted in casualties, but the identities of those involved have not been disclosed. The conflict in Las Anod, which started on February 6, has led to heavy fighting between Somaliland troops and local militia from the Dhulbahante clan, resulting in numerous fatalities and the displacement of thousands of residents.

On August 24, 2023, **the authorities in the Banaadir region announced their intention to intensify security operations and house searches in order to counter the threats posed by the extremist group Al-Shabaab.** The governor of Banaadir, Saalax Dheere, stated during a press conference in the capital, Mogadishu, that the regional administration will conduct comprehensive house searches and inspections of all areas at risk to ensure the safety of the city. This decision was made as part of the efforts to strengthen security in Mogadishu, following discussions held by Prime Minister Xamza Cabdi Barre on August 22, 2023, regarding the improvement and reinforcement of the city's security measures. The Banaadir administration aims to include all residential areas and targeted locations within Mogadishu, particularly the districts of Kaxda, Dharkenley, Deyniile, Daaru-Salaam, Yaaqshiid, Garasbaaley, Heliwaa, and Gubadley. Moreover, the authorities emphasized that the search operations will strictly adhere to the law and ensure the protection of citizens' rights, avoiding any unnecessary disturbance or violation of privacy. This proactive approach aims to deter and prevent any potential security threats that may jeopardize the peace and stability of the capital city.

On August 24, 2023, **a whistle-blower from Somalia's Auditor General's Office exposed an alleged web of deceit, corruption, and abuse of power within the institution.** Ahmed Gutale, the newly appointed Auditor General, is at the centre of the allegations. The whistle-blower, Abdale Mohamed, Director of Communications and IT at the Auditor's Office

revealed in a three-page statement that Gutale manipulated audit results, altered the tone of audit reports, and disregarded principles of transparency and unbiased assessment. The statement also accused Gutale of initiating and overseeing special investigations outside standard procedures, halting investigations arbitrarily, and engaging in clandestine dealings. Conflict of interest was alleged, with Gutale favouring individuals and groups based on clan and political affiliations. The whistle-blower further exposed instances of bullying, harassment, intimidation, and demands for kickbacks from entities under investigation. These revelations cast serious doubts on the integrity and mission of the Auditor General's Office and raise concerns about corruption and lack of transparency within Somalia's institutions.



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