# (U) Current Patterns of IED Use in Somalia

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Photo Credit:
"A Ugandan peacekeeper guards the presidential palace in Mogadishu, the Somali capital. (Mohamed Dahir / AFP/Getty Images / August 26, 2009)" Edmund Sanders. *In Somalia, troops for peace end up at war -- latimes.com*. http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-somalia-peacekeepers29-2009aug29,0,964713.story (accessed September 10, 2009).

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(U) *Key Points*

- (U//FOUO) Al-Shabaab employs Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) against the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and African Union (AU) peacekeepers in Mogadishu.

- (U//FOUO) Al-Shabaab employed five Suicide Vehicle-borne IEDs (SVBIEDs) and one Person-Borne IED (PBIED) between January and December 2009, primarily targeting TFG leadership and AU peacekeepers.

- (U//FOUO) More than 80 percent of all IED-related fatalities were associated with SVBIED and PBIED in 2009.

- (U//FOUO) Al-Shabaab will continue to focus its IED efforts against TFG and AU operations as part of a strategy of attrition and exhaustion.

(U) *Summary*

(U//FOUO) Shabaab al-Mujahideen (aka al-Shabaab, aka Mujahideen Youth Movement) is the Salafist-Jihadist off-shoot of the Mogadishu-based Islamic Courts Union (ICU). Al-Shabaab's leaders maintain connections with al-Qaeda, and receives financial, logistical, and rhetorical support.[1] The group is fighting the internationally recognized TFG for control of Somalia's southern cities, and ultimately seeks to control the entire Horn of Africa. Al-Shabaab employs IEDs in support of its broader strategy of ousting the TFG and the contingent of African Union peacekeepers (mostly from Uganda and Burundi) protecting the TFG, called the African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). As a result, their IEDs target TFG and AMISOM personnel and operations. Al-Shabaab will continue to focus its IED efforts against TFG and AMISOM operations, primarily in Mogadishu, as part of an al-Qaeda-inspired strategy of attrition and exhaustion.

(U) *Al-Shabaab's IED Deployment Patterns*

(U//FOUO) Al-Shabaab substantially increased its use of IEDs after the Ethiopian invasion and subsequent occupation of Somalia from late 2006 through 2008, going from a few incidents in 2006 to 74 in 2007. Since the Ethiopian military pullout in late 2008, al-Shabaab now targets TFG leadership and the AMISOM presence in Mogadishu and several other towns, mostly in southern Somalia. For example, in August and October 2009 IEDs targeted AMISOM military vehicles in Beledweyne and Mogadishu, respectively.

(U//FOUO) Al-Shabaab leadership takes credit for the Ethiopian pullout, suggesting that their IED, mortar, and small-arms harassment operations forced the regional military power to flee.

As a result, it now integrates all these tactics into its broader insurgency strategy. IEDs will remain a significant threat to TFG, AMISOM, and foreign organizations operating in the country as long as Al-Shabaab sees value in their use.

(U//FOUO) The TFG maintains its own military and police capability and a symbolic presence in Mogadishu around the presidential palace (called the Villa Somalia) and the Mogadishu airport. A contingency of African Union troops protects TFG assets and trains its military under a mandated mission. Al-Shabaab regularly emplaces IEDs along roads that connect AMISOM and TFG bases of operations within Mogadishu. These include ongoing attacks around the K4 intersection and the airport. For example, of the 19 IED attacks in Mogadishu between January and the end of June 2009, at least 6 were identified at the K4 intersection. The pattern continued for the rest of 2009, including at least four more IED incidents targeting AMISOM vehicles in Mogadishu. The Maka al-Mukarama road that crosses the K4 intersection and connects the AMISOM base (at the former site of the Somali National University) to TFG's base at the Villa Somalia is also identified as a location with a high number of IED attacks.

(U//FOUO) Al-Shabaab continues to fight AMISOM and TFG security elements throughout Somalia, eschewing intentional targeting of civilian populations and foreign aid workers. For instance, they employ IEDs in locations known to be bases of AMISOM and TFG operations in Mogadishu, a geographic shift from previous years and a response to the relocation of the TFG from Mogadishu to Baidoa[2] and back to Mogadishu. It suggests a TFG-centered strategy rather than one that intends to coerce popular support.

(U//FOUO) Al-Shabaab's use of IEDs is selective, often employed against high value targets (HVTs) associated with the TFG. A person-borne IED (PBIED) operative killed three TFG cabinet ministers and 20 others at a graduation ceremony in southern Mogadishu on 3 December 2009. Al-Shabaab has employed five suicide vehicle-borne IEDs (SVBIEDs) between January and December 2009, reflecting a similar al-Qaeda strategy of deploying SVBIEDs only in strategically sensitive attacks. The 24 May 2009 SVBIED attack on AMISOM's base was in response to an ongoing TFG offensive to drive al-Shabaab and its supporters out of the areas it controls in Mogadishu. The dual SVBIED attack on 17 September 2009 targeted the AMISOM base during a meeting of AMISOM and TFG officials and killed 17, including the deputy military commander for AMISOM, Major General Juvenal Niyoyunguruza.[3]

(U//FOUO) The calculated strategic use of SVBIEDs and PBIEDs accounts for a high number of fatalities. Over 80 percent of all IED-related fatalities in Somalia between January and December 2009 were associated with these five attacks.

(U) *The Implications of an "al-Qaeda" Strategy in Somalia*

(U//FOUO) Though al-Qaeda's interests in Somalia go back to the group's Sudan era in the early-1990s, senior al-Qaeda leadership aided al-Shabaab through a series of international calls for funds and fighters between 2006 and 2007. One recent report describes it as a "direct endorsement for foreign mujahedeen recruits to travel to Somalia and fight."[4] The Ethiopian intervention, resented by most Somalis, and Al-Qaeda's endorsement of jihad in Somalia led to

the migration of hundreds of foreign fighters, who emulated recent tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) developed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

(U//FOUO) Al-Shabaab will continue to use IEDs in an effort to exhaust the resources and will of AMISOM peacekeepers.  Their strategic goal is to drive the AMISOM mission out of Somalia and cause the TFG to fail or flee the country.  Current open source reporting claims that AMISOM troops are underfunded and under-sourced.  Al-Qaida hopes that this will dishearten AMISOM supporters, increasing the likelihood that its mission will fail before its mandate is accomplished; creating the kind of safe haven al-Qaeda has been looking for since the loss of Taliban-controlled Afghanistan in 2001.[5]

(U) *Conclusion*

(U//FOUO) Al-Shabaab has substantially increased its use of IEDs since the Ethiopia invasion and subsequent occupation.  Since the Ethiopian army pull-out and the arrival of AMISOM troops in Somalia, al-Shabaab has refocused its IED targeting toward TFG and AMISOM assets in Mogadishu.  Al-Shabaab's selective, strategic use of SVBIED and PBIEDs reflects current al-Qaeda TTPs.  Al-Shabaab will continue to use IEDs in an effort to exhaust the resources and will of AMISOM peacekeepers and TFG security elements.  Their strategic goal is to drive the AMISOM mission out of Somalia and cause the TFG to fail.  It would also offer al-Qaeda the opportunity to take public credit for a regional victory conducted by Al-Shabaab, and may have significant negative implications for long-term stability in the Horn of Africa.

(U) **Endnote**

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[1] For examples, see "Audio of Al-Zawahiri Supporting Somali 'Brothers' Against Ethiopian Forces." https://www.opensource.gov/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_246_203_121123_43/content/Display/672606 4?highlightQuery=eJzT0KhKLE%2FMyCzKVAj3DPHw9FMI8QzxcdVUcPRzUcCQCw5wdfR2DYLIFufnJuZkJm oCALuRFHE%3D&fileSize=47050756 (accessed September 1, 2009).

[2] Baidoa was the temporary location for the TFG in 2008. Eleven IED attacks occurred there in 2008, none so far in 2009 (as of September 2009).

[3] HMS. *TRITON Report for Incidents during September 2009*, September 2009

[4] Evan Kohlmann, 2009. "Shabaab al-Mujahideen: Migration and Jihad in the Horn of Africa," NEFA Foundation.

[5] Edmund Sanders. *In Somalia, troops for peace end up at war -- latimes.com*. http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-somalia-peacekeepers29-2009aug29,0,964713.story (accessed September 10, 2009).