

## OVERVIEW

In early February, Somalia saw intensified conflict between militant groups and security forces. Al Shabaab targeted Somali and Ugandan forces in Lower Shabelle, Beledweyne, and Ceel Barde but faced setbacks due to counterterrorism efforts by SNA Danab forces and NISA. The group escalated propaganda efforts, while Puntland forces, backed by suspected UAE airstrikes, dismantled ISIS bases in Tog Jaceel, killing over 40 militants. Puntland's President Deni emphasised independent operations, though federal support was later pledged.

In Yemen, AQAP launched a drone attack on Yemeni forces, while Houthi clashes with Legitimate Yemeni Forces continued in Taiz and Al Dhale. Authorities intercepted Houthi weapon smuggling linked to Iran. The Houthis condemned U.S.-Israeli policies, vowing to resume Red Sea operations if Gaza's population is displaced under Trump's plan.

## AL SHABAAB ACTIVITY

### Somalia from 3 to 6 February 2025

On 3 February, Jubaland special forces conducted an operation in the Midnimo area, near Kismayo, resulting in the killing of two Al Shabaab members and the injury of another. In response, Al Shabaab retaliated, with authorities reporting the killing of two elite Danab soldiers in an operation likely carried out by Amniyaat, the militant group's military wing. On the same day, an explosion targeted a military checkpoint in Beledweyne, as Central Somalia remained the scene of intense clashes between Al Shabaab and the Somali National Army (SNA) for over a week.

On 5 February, Al Shabaab resumed attacks against Ugandan forces, claiming to have killed and injured more than five soldiers after targeting a convoy on the road between Km 60 and Buufoow in Lower Shabelle. The militants continued shelling SNA bases in Buloburde, marking the second attack this week, following a similar attack on 3 February. Additionally, the group assaulted an SNA base in Ceel Barde, near the Ethiopian border, though casualty figures remain unconfirmed.

Lower Shabelle remained the most targeted region, experiencing sustained attacks throughout the week. Al Shabaab continued its offensive, claiming to have injured four SNA soldiers in an explosion targeting a military gathering.

## Propaganda Campaign

Apart from military operations, Al Shabaab's propaganda apparatus remained highly active during this period, with the group releasing two videos showcasing its attacks on 3 and 5 February. The attack on 5 February, similar to the one two days earlier, took place in Buulo Mareer, 90 km south of Mogadishu, where the militants claimed ambushing and killing an SNA soldier. As in the previous video, the deceased soldier in this clip was not wearing a uniform and bore no insignia indicating affiliation with the military forces.

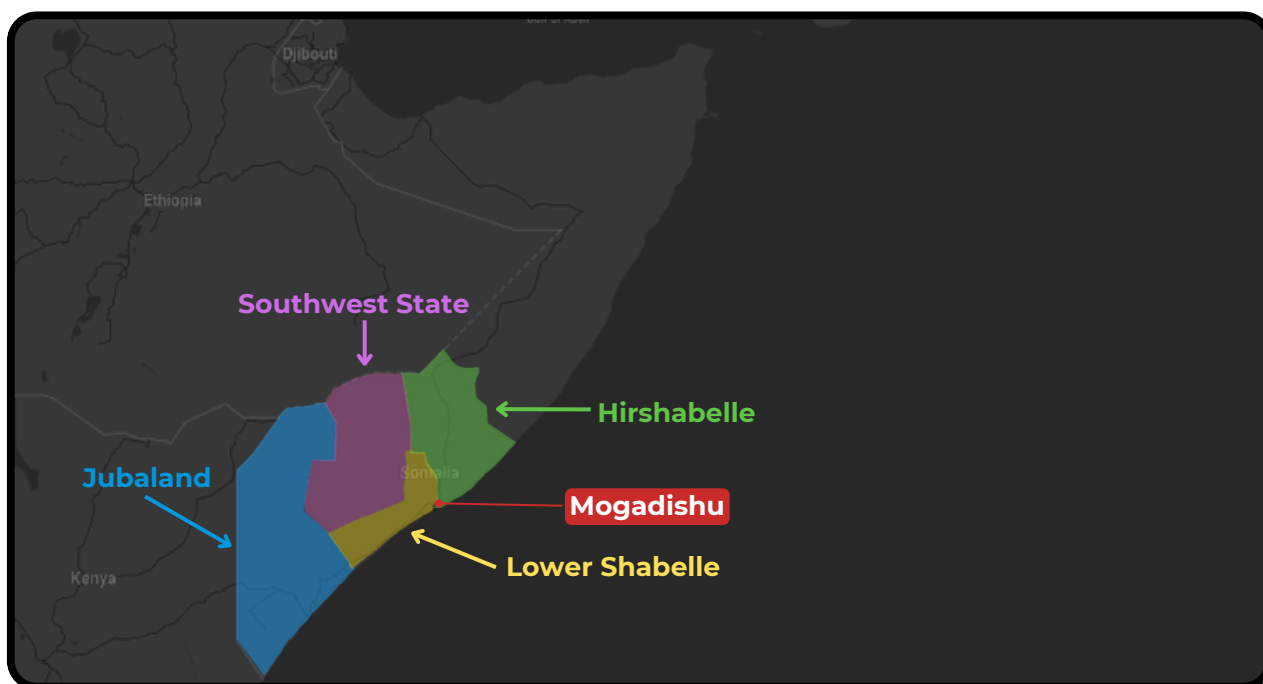
On 4 February, the Somali Minister of Information highlighted the group's growing presence in the cyber battlespace, noting that Al Shabaab has created over 1,000 social media accounts to spread propaganda and target the Somali Government.

### **AL SHABAAB MILITANT AMBUSHING A MEMBER OF SOMALIA'S MILITARY IN BUULO MAREER**

**SOURCE: AL KATAIB**



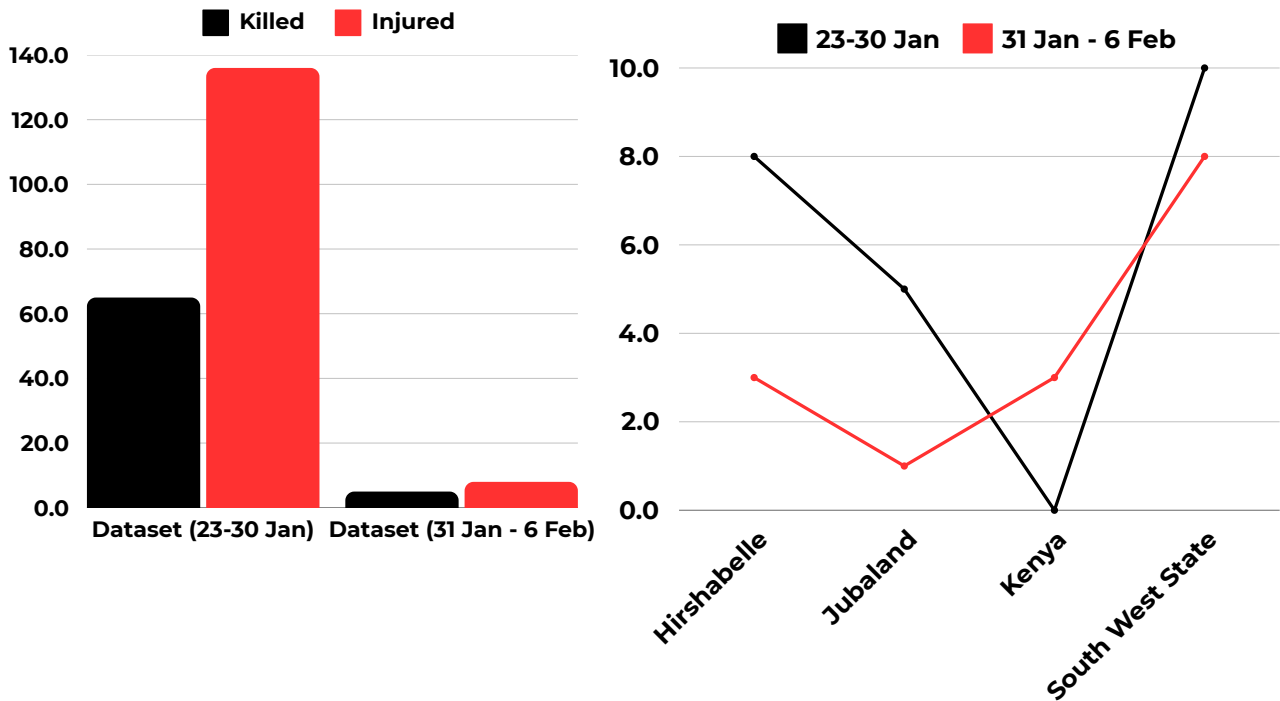
## MAP OF AREAS SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECTED BY AL SHABAAB ATTACKS IN EARLY FEBRUARY 2025



Al Shabaab's operational activity and casualty impact have significantly declined following intensified counterterrorism operations carried out by the Somali National Army's (SNA) elite Danab forces, and the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA). Recent military efforts have resulted in a notable reduction in both the frequency and lethality of attacks, suggesting that ongoing security measures have disrupted the group's operational capacity. The number of recorded incidents and casualties has dropped considerably compared to the previous period, indicating that sustained pressure on militant strongholds is limiting their ability to conduct large-scale operations.

Despite this decline, regional hotspots remain consistent, with South West State experiencing the highest number of attacks and Hirshabelle continuing to record the most casualties, reflecting persistent security challenges in these areas. At the same time, Al Shabaab appears to be shifting its focus regionally, recently launching attacks beyond Somalia's borders into northern Kenya. This cross-border activity suggests an adaptive strategy, as the group seeks to extend its influence and destabilise neighbouring regions in response to increased military pressure within Somalia.

## Comparative Data of Al Shabaab Attacks



### Highlights

- Casualties dropped by 96% following recent operations by SNA, DANAB and NISA, indicating a significant impact on Al Shabaab's operational capacity.
- Regional hotspots remain unchanged, with South West State and Hirshabelle continuing to experience the highest number of attacks.

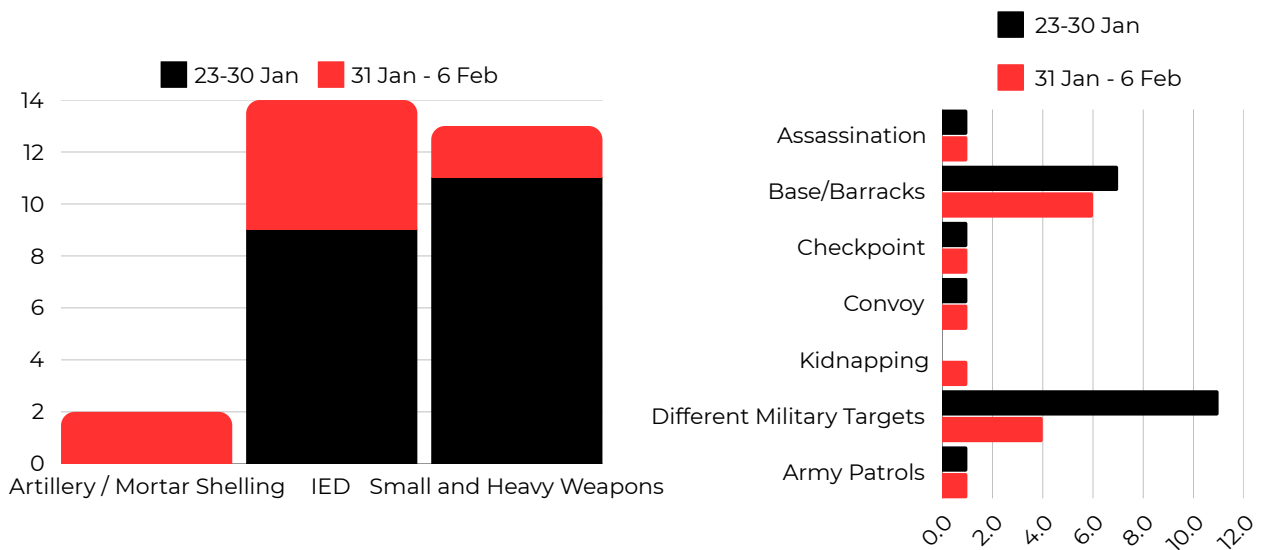
### Al Shabaab's operational activity and casualty impact

Al Shabaab carried out 24 attacks between 23 and 30 January, resulting in 65 fatalities and 136 injuries, bringing the total number of casualties to 201. In contrast, from 31 January to 6 February of this year, only 15 incidents were recorded, leading to 5 deaths and 8 injuries, reflecting a significant decline in both attacks and casualties.

### Regional impact and cross-border expansion

South West State remains the most affected region in Somalia, experiencing the highest number of attacks. Hirshabelle recorded the highest number of casualties, indicating increased lethality in operations. Between 31 January and 6 February, Al Shabaab expanded its activities beyond Somalia, carrying out two incursions into northern Kenya, suggesting a potential shift towards regional destabilisation efforts.

## Comparative Data of Al Shabaab Attacks



### Weapons Usage and Target Selection

Al Shabaab maintained a consistent pattern of attacks between 23 January and 6 February, primarily targeting military installations, convoys and security forces. Bases, barracks and patrols remained the most frequently attacked locations, while assassinations remained steady across both periods. Although attacks on military bases and convoys slightly declined, cross-border operations into Kenya increased, indicating a shift in regional focus rather than a change in target selection.

In terms of weapons usage, IEDs and small arms were the most commonly employed between 23 and 30 January, with limited reliance on mortar shelling and RPGs. However, from 31 January to 6 February, the use of IEDs declined, potentially due to supply chain disruptions or counter-IED measures, while small arms and combined tactics (small arms and IEDs) remained dominant.

Al Shabaab's overall operational approach remained stable in terms of assassinations, but there was a slight reduction in large-scale attacks on military bases. At the same time, the group increased cross-border incursions into Kenya, suggesting an adaptive strategy in response to heightened security measures within Somalia.

## ISIS SOMALIA ACTIVITY IN PUNTLAND

On 4 February, Puntland Armed Forces engaged in heavy combat with ISIS militants in the Tog Jaceel area, a known stronghold for the group. The offensive resulted in Puntland forces claiming the deaths of over 40 ISIS militants, many of whom were identified as foreign fighters based on images released. The operation led to the dismantling of several bases and hideouts, with government forces securing the area between Dharin and Qurac villages in the Tog Jaceel area.

In addition to ground engagements, airstrikes targeted ISIS hideouts in Tog Jaceel, reportedly killing over 15 militants. The identity of the state responsible for these airstrikes remains unconfirmed, though local sources speculate the United Arab Emirates (UAE) may have been involved. Puntland forces also suffered casualties, with approximately 15 troops killed and over 50 wounded, according to local sources. This casualty count was corroborated by pro-ISIS social media accounts, which also published images of deceased Puntland soldiers.

Puntland's internal forces and Karkaar regional police have also been active, conducting operations against suspected ISIS members in the Biyo Gaduud area of Karkaar. Puntland's security agencies have launched an intelligence operation aimed at disrupting ISIS's financial networks, closing numerous accounts linked to the group, although funds were withdrawn prior to these closures.

In an effort to boost morale, Puntland state's President Said Abdullahi Deni visited wounded soldiers in Bari, delivering a speech in which he emphasised Puntland's independent fight against terrorism, with support from international allies but not from the Somali Government. He highlighted the presence of foreign fighters within ISIS ranks in Somalia and claimed that over 100 militants had been killed by Puntland forces up to that point.

In response to President Deni's comments, Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud ordered the Somali Government to provide support to Puntland Armed Forces and join the fight against ISIS, indicating a potential shift towards greater national collaboration in counter-terrorism efforts within Somalia.

### **WEAPONS SEIZED BY PUNTLAND FORCES DURING THE ANTI-ISIS OPERATION IN CAL MISKAAD**

**SOURCE: PCT**



# AL QAEDA AND HOUTHIS ACTIVITY IN YEMEN

In Yemen, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) carried out an attack at a location in Al Baqira, deploying at least one loitering munition drone to attack personnel of the UAE-backed 2nd Support and Reinforcement Brigade, injuring three soldiers. AQAP released visuals of the attack, while the brigade claimed its soldiers were wounded while repelling an Al Qaeda assault. However, this claim appears to be inaccurate based on the evidence provided by AQAP.

The Houthis continue to engage in clashes with Legitimate Yemeni Forces, who report having repelled 18 attacks and infiltration attempts across various fronts in Taiz province. Further clashes were reported in Al Dhale province at the Mureis Front. Yemeni authorities announced the arrest of two Houthi operatives accused of smuggling weapons, stating that, according to preliminary investigations, they transported prohibited materials from Djibouti to the coasts of Al-Mukha as part of a smuggling operation funded and supported by Iran.

In addition to the armed conflict, the Houthis' Political Bureau issued a statement condemning the US and Israel, reaffirming their commitment to supporting Palestinians in resisting aggression. This suggests that their operations in the Red Sea could resume if Gaza's population is relocated in line with Trump's proposed plan.

## AL QAEDA DRONE ATTACK IN AL BAQIRA, YEMEN

SOURCE: ANSAR AL SHARIA



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