

Protection Of Civilians

PROTECTION SERIES: 6/2022

'It is too much to kill three or four Al Shabaab'

Civilian perceptions on Al Shabaab and harm from US airstrikes in Jubbaland, Somalia

Colophon

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Cover photo: Aerial view of an SNA checkpoint near Kismayo, the capital of Somalia's Jubbaland state, October 4, 2012 (AMISOM Public Information).

Lay-out: Ondergrond Agency

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author and PAX first and foremost want to thank all civilians in Jubbaland who took the time to speak to us to share their – often difficult – experiences. We further want to thank all officials and experts at various NGOs and thinktanks for providing us with their expertise. We are particularly grateful for Airwars for providing us with their data and their time. Finally, we want to thank various PAX colleagues for their input and suggestions: Cor Oudes, Frank Slijper, Hans Rouw and Wilbert van der Zeijden.

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DONOR SUPPORT

This report was made possible with financial support from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department for Stabilization and Humanitarian Aid (DSH).

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List of acronyms

AFRICOM	Africa Command
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
ATMIS	African Transition Mission in Somalia
AU	African Union
CHMR-AP	Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan
ICU	Islamic Courts Union
PPM	Presidential Policy Memorandum
SNA	Somali National Army
US	United States
USD	United States Dollar

1. Introduction

Located in the Horn of Africa, Somalia has been subject to US counterterror military operations since at least 2001, with the first public airstrikes having been carried out in January, 2007.¹ While the country has not experienced an air campaign as intense as the ones in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan, the presence and continuously looming threat of US airstrikes have nonetheless become a regular feature of life for many Somali civilians and a source of personal and communal harm. Besides a few high-profile instances, the strikes have not been treated as notable on the international stage. Consequently their broader impact on Somalis has remained largely unexamined.

Strikes increased in 2017 under the administration of former President Trump (2017-21) after his government introduced a new mandate that loosened the restrictions that had been in place to prevent civilian casualties in Somalia.² From circa 2019 onwards, civil society organizations and journalists began publishing reports investigating civilian casualties caused by US operations in the country.³ Mostly, such information has come from the Lower Shabelle and Banaadir areas more accessible to the state's capital, Mogadishu. US operations in the extensive southern state of Jubbaland – covering a territory of over 110,000 square kilometers – and their resulting civilian harm impacts have mostly escaped scrutiny.⁴ This is remarkable given that, according to Airwars data, Jubbaland has experienced the most airstrikes of all of Somalia's six federal member states.⁵ It is, moreover, the only state in Somalia that contains a territory fully controlled by Al Shabaab, the fundamentalist group that is largely the target of US operations.⁶

This report seeks to fill this gap and studies the broader impact of US strikes in Jubbaland territory. The emphasis is on strikes carried out during the Trump administration when airstrikes were most frequent.

1 Airwars, *US Forces in Somalia* [website], <https://airwars.org/conflict/us-forces-in-somalia/>, (accessed 28 September 2022).

2 C. Savage and E. Schmitt, 'Trump Eases Combat Rules in Somalia Intended to Protect Civilians', *The New York Times*, 30 March 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/30/world/africa/trump-is-said-to-ease-combat-rules-in-somalia-designed-to-protect-civilians.html>, (accessed 14 August 2022); J. Davis, 'Statement by Pentagon Spokesman Capt. Jeff Davis on U.S. Counterterrorism Operations in Somalia' [press release], 30 March 2017, U.S. Department of Defense, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/1135338/statement-by-pentagon-spokesman-capt-jeff-davis-on-us-counterterrorism-operatio/>, (accessed 14 August 2022).

3 See, for instance, Amnesty International, *The Hidden US War in Somalia* [report], 2019.

4 Exceptions are Amnesty International, 'Somalia: Zero accountability as civilian deaths mount from US air strikes', *Amnesty International* [blog], 1 April 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/04/somalia-zero-accountability-as-civilian-deaths-mount-from-us-air-strikes/> (accessed 9 August 2022); Human Rights Watch, 'Somalia: Inadequate U.S. Airstrike Investigations', *Human Rights Watch* [blog].

5 As per data provided by Airwars to the researcher.

6 The US has occasionally carried out airstrikes on ISIS in Somalia, see, for instance, U.S. Africa Command Public Affairs, 'U.S. airstrike targets ISIS-Somalia in support of the Federal Government of Somalia' [press release], 28 July 2019, U.S. Africa Command, (accessed 17 August 2022).

The report has two main aims:

- ◆ To research the broader impact of the airstrikes in Jubbaland. Beyond civilian deaths and injuries, airstrikes directly and indirectly affect civilians in numerous ways, including prompting displacement, causing loss of livelihood and contributing to mental trauma. Reverberating effects in particular have received little to no attention.
- ◆ To get a better sense of who is on the receiving end of US airstrikes in Jubbaland by examining Al Shabaab membership and what this means in the context of a state that is largely under Al Shabaab control, and to relate these findings to broader questions about the desirability and effectiveness of the US military approach to the conflict in Jubbaland and Somalia.

A combination of several factors such as difficulties accessing interviewees and traveling securely around Somalia, fear of reprisals among civilians when speaking to researchers and lack of a free, robust civil society has resulted in only limited public information being available about US operations. This narrow understanding of the way the strikes have manifested in a diverse and sizable nation makes it difficult for Somali and American civil society, not to mention the public at large, to assess whether the US military is upholding an adequate standard of transparency and accountability in this theater of operations and to get a sense of the extent to which these operations are negatively affecting civilians. However, at PAX we consider it vital to gain a better understanding of the human experience of those affected by conflict.

The focus of this report is thus mainly on civilian harm as a result of airstrikes. However, we note that a significant portion of these airstrikes were likely conducted by uncrewed, remotely piloted aircraft. The use of drones for airstrikes as described in this report has a relation to the nature of these airstrikes. PAX has elsewhere published reports on the use of drones and the related legal, societal and political issues.⁷ The report 'Human Rights and Human Realities' in particular deals with the link between the use of drones and some of the issues raised in this report.⁸ This report, however, does not seek to provide a legal analysis of the conflict or specific operations. Rather, it seeks to bring the experience of civilians caught in conflict to the fore.

The report is structured as follows: The main research findings and PAX's recommendations for future action can be found in chapter 2. This is followed by sections on research methodology (chapter 3), the context of the Somali conflict (chapter 4) and the context of US operations in Jubbaland and other parts of Somalia and related civilian harm allegations (chapter 5). The findings of our research regarding direct and reverberating civilian harm effects of US operations are presented in chapters 6 and 7 respectively. We present our findings with regard to who the US is targeting and related concerns in chapter 8.

⁷ See PAX, *Armed drones* [website], <https://paxforpeace.nl/what-we-do/programmes/armed-drones>.

⁸ G. Dvaladze, A. Jansen & W. Zwijnenburg, *Human Rights and Human Realities: Local perspectives on drone strikes and international law* [report], 2018.



FIGURE 1 Map of Somalia, showing the Jubaland region – which consists of the provinces Gedo, Lower Juba (Juba Hoose) and Middle Juba (Juba Dhexe) – in the south (© United Nations, 2011).

2. Key findings and recommendations

Principally, this report sheds light on how US airstrikes affect civilians in Jubbaland, Somalia. The report looks at the short and long-term, physical and non-physical impact of the airstrikes and at the direct and reverberating effects these have on the population of Jubbaland. The report further seeks to enhance understanding of who are targeted by the US – giving a face to the rules applied under former President Trump regarding the use of lethal force against terrorism suspects abroad – and to what extent these targets pose a real threat to US operational and national security.

In this regard, the research done for this report gives further credence to existing concerns about operations by the US Africa Command (AFRICOM), in particular where it concerns transparency, accountability and response to incidents of civilian harm. A lack of transparency by the US contributes to limited data being available from which to draw conclusions, but the interviews conducted for this report support the impression that perhaps not all US operations meet the threshold of military necessity when viewed in relation to the civilian harm caused and the military objectives achieved. More transparency and clarity is needed from the US military to properly assess and address these concerns.

Further, it must be noted that news has recently emerged about the Biden administration's new policy guiding the use of counterterrorism drone strikes outside conventional war zones.⁹ However, much remains unknown to the public about this Presidential Policy Memorandum (PPM), further limiting assessments of whether the US is moving forward with a strategy to resolve the conflict in Somalia in a way that is less harmful to the civilian population.

2.1 Key findings

US airstrikes negatively affect civilians in Jubbaland in several ways. In terms of direct effects, several interviewees alleged that certain airstrikes had killed civilians instead of, or in addition to, Al Shabaab combatants. Among these accounts are allegations that US airstrikes resulted in the deaths of several children. We further received reports of injuries caused by US military operations,

⁹ C. Savage, 'White House Tightens Rules on Counterterrorism Drone Strikes', *The New York Times*, 10 October 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/07/us/politics/drone-strikes-biden-trump.html>, (accessed 22 October 2022).

some of them chronic and affecting people's quality of life and ability to earn a living in the long term. Furthermore, because of the remote setting in which many airstrikes take place, as well as people's limited financial means, many civilians that have sustained injuries are unable to access appropriate medical care. A further form of physical impact of US airstrikes is damage to personal property, such as livestock and agricultural tools and lands. Finally, interviewees frequently bring up the issue of mental trauma as a consequence of US airstrikes, referring to sensitivity to loud noises, feelings of overwhelming stress and anxiety and, in isolated cases, mental illness.

Airstrikes have caused several reverberating civilian harm effects. Many interviewees mentioned economic harm: Airstrikes often cause damage to tools, agricultural fields or livestock on which many civilians in Jubbaland depend for their livelihood. Additionally, injuries can limit people in their ability to work. Economic harm is often a cause for displacement: Unable to make ends meet, people leave their homes in search of opportunities elsewhere. Frequently, civilians who experienced airstrikes have ended up in displacement camps, where they can be more vulnerable to gender-related violence and where access to medical care, education and economic opportunities is often limited. There are also reverberating effects at the community level: Interviewees describe how – when an airstrike happens – they feel like being marked as Al Shabaab, which can lead to hostility and stigmatization by their fellow community members. At the same time, airstrikes are also reported to lead to paranoia among Al Shabaab, with the group sometimes accusing civilians of being 'spies' for the Americans and detaining or beating people.

The impact of airstrikes clearly takes a broad toll on communities across Jubbaland, affecting more people than the intended targets alone and frequently resulting in long-term negative effects. It is crucial to take such broader impact into account when assessing the desirability and effectiveness of any military intervention. For further reflection regarding such questions, PAX also examined how Al Shabaab is embedded in Jubbaland society and who makes up its rank-and-file membership. In other words: who, potentially, are on the receiving end of US airstrikes? According to our interviewees, many individuals considered members of Al Shabaab are forcefully recruited; many others join because they perceive a lack of other options. Interviewees argued that only very few individuals considered Al Shabaab members are fanatically supporting the group's cause. This raises concerns about the question whether individual Al Shabaab members can be assumed to pose a threat to the United States' operational or national security to the extent that this warrants the use of lethal force.

Current limited transparency about airstrikes and their consequences means that in most cases we were unable to verify the status of targeted persons as either combatant or civilian and we found no evidence of the US knowingly or willingly targeting individuals they themselves consider to be civilians. However, the interviews for this report do raise serious questions about the ability of the US to consistently distinguish between armed men who are not involved with Al Shabaab, armed pastoralist community members who are forced to work for Al Shabaab and actual Al Shabaab fighters. Al Shabaab is thoroughly ingrained in Jubbaland society, which complicates external observations about who is and is not Al Shabaab and can thus hamper proper application of the principle of distinction. Combined with a lack of transparency both about intended targets and about actual effects of airstrikes, the concern remains that targeting decisions can be made on the basis of incomplete or incorrect perceptions.

Finally, several interviewees reported that Al Shabaab actively uses the occurrence of airstrikes and resulting civilian harm as a recruitment tool. Taken together with our finding that airstrikes lead to broad civilian harm impacts in Jubbaland, this raises the question whether short-term military objectives achieved through the use of airstrikes effectively contribute to the objective of stimulating safety and security for civilians in Somalia in the longer term.

2.2 Recommendations

To the US Africa Command (AFRICOM)

- ◆ Consider temporarily ceasing all US airstrikes in Somalia in light of questions regarding their military necessity and strategic use when viewed in relation to the civilian harm they cause (see also our recommendations for the US Department of Defense).
- ◆ Conduct an independent review of AFRICOM's ability to distinguish between civilians and combatants in Al Shabaab-controlled territory in light of the concerns raised here and in other reporting.
- ◆ Refrain from carrying out airstrikes on lower-level Al Shabaab members and ensure that lethal force is never used against non-combatants or persons whose status as either civilian or combatant is uncertain.
- ◆ Apply new guidance following the Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan (CHMR-AP) and upcoming Department of Defense Instruction to redesign the use of airstrikes and civilian harm tracking, investigation, mitigation and response activities in Somalia.
- ◆ Recognize that, beyond direct civilian harm effects (i.e., deaths, injuries and material damage), US operations can cause reverberating civilian harm effects and systematically take into account direct and reverberating civilian harm effects in collateral damage estimates and targeting decisions.
- ◆ When investigating civilian harm reports, triangulate data as much as possible by combining military data with open-source intelligence, geolocation analysis, on-the-ground investigations and witness interviews. Remain open to cooperation with non-military organizations to address potential evidentiary gaps when any of the above (e.g., ground investigations) are not possible.
- ◆ Facilitate external reporting of civilian harm incidents by improving AFRICOM's current civilian harm reporting mechanism, the online portal, and by investing in other context-appropriate reporting mechanisms, based on the findings and recommendations – specifically regarding user friendliness and awareness raising – of the 2022 PAX report *Civilian harm reporting mechanisms: A useful means to support monitoring and accountability?*
- ◆ When civilian harm incidents occur, offer a detailed explanation of how this could have happened, as well as a meaningful apology to the victims.
- ◆ Offer appropriate amends, for instance in the form of *ex gratia* payments, regardless of legal obligations, to all civilians who have suffered direct and/or reverberating civilian harm as a result of AFRICOM operations.

To the US Department of Defense

- ◆ Temporarily suspend US operations in Somalia until there has been an independent review weighing the risks of civilian harm against the military gains of these operations, also taking into account reports that the airstrikes may have the adverse effect of potentially serving as a recruitment tool for Al Shabaab.
- ◆ Uniformly apply a definition of 'civilian' across the US military based on how this concept is defined in the United Nations Protection of Civilians policy, namely:

[E]veryone is to be considered a civilian, except persons falling in one of the following categories:

- members of the armed forces;
- members of an organized armed group with continuous combat function; and
- civilians directly participating in hostilities, for such time as they do so.

In case of doubt whether a person is a civilian, that person shall be considered a civilian.¹⁰

To the US government

- ◆ Publicly disclose, to the greatest extent possible, the recent Presidential Policy Memorandum (PPM) that guides the use of counterterrorism drone strikes outside conventional war zones.

10 United Nations Department of Peace Operations, 'The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping', 1 November 2019, (https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/poc_policy_2019_.pdf), p.6.

3. Methodology

Research for this report was carried out in Jubbaland state and in Nairobi, Kenya, in March and April, 2022, and over the course of approximately six months in ongoing conversations with current and former analysts, experts and officials. In the report, all names of interviewed civilians and officials who requested anonymity for security reasons, such as concern over reprisals from either the Somali government or Al Shabaab, have been changed – indicated through the use of an asterisk behind their name – or left out. The sections below explain the research process, identify several research limitations and introduce the terminology used to describe and study civilian harm.

3.1 Interviews

In Jubbaland, research consisted of face-to-face interviews and small focus group discussions in Kismayo, the state capital. The researcher interviewed twenty people who personally experienced airstrikes. Interviewees were identified through a community leader who works with Al Shabaab defectors in Kismayo and who liaised with leaders in displacement camps to identify appropriate people to interview.¹¹ The researcher further interviewed seven former and current Somali officials with relevant knowledge of US military operations. Some of these officials work across Jubbaland, outside of Kismayo, and could not be met in person for security reasons. The researcher further conducted a phone interview with a staffer in Kismayo's main hospital and with a psychosocial support officer who works with Al Shabaab defectors.

The people who were interviewed represent a diverse group with a multitude of relevant knowledge and experience. All were displaced from Jubbaland areas under complete Al Shabaab control and so could speak to the overall experience of US airstrikes in areas wholly held by the organization: this makes them unique as compared to interviewees in other researches who tend to come from places where control is more fluid. Five interviewees were Al Shabaab defectors who shed light on the local dynamics of Al Shabaab and the motivations and make up of its group members. Three of the interviewees were camp leaders who represent the displaced community and act as a referral point for services and coordination. They too were displaced from their homes in Jubbaland and were impacted either directly or indirectly by strikes. Their position gives them a wider understanding of the population of the camps, enabling them to speak in generalizations about the impact of strikes on displaced people. The leaders are from Galbet and Dal Xiska zones, which sit on opposite sides of the city, and receive people from different clans who live in separate parts of Jubbaland.

Relevant officials to interview were identified through the researcher's professional network and outreach on social media. Interviewees include people who deal or dealt with issues related to

¹¹ PAX paid the community leader a day rate as translator and provided funding for the fuel needed to transport interviewees.

displacement and international affairs in Jubbaland. The researcher also spoke to a current member of the Jubbaland wing of Danab, the Somali Special Forces trained by the US.

Finally, the researcher consulted several Somalia experts, researchers and analysts from a range of international organizations and institutions who shared broader overviews on US military operations in Somalia and provided insight into the Jubbaland landscape in regards to its population, economy and how Al Shabaab operates in the state.

Where possible, data obtained from interviewees was triangulated through desktop research or communications with other informants. Airwars contributed significantly to this report by providing their data.

3.2 Limitations

There are a number of limitations to consider with regard to this research. The first concerns a limited contextual understanding. As Al Shabaab controls the majority of the country, large parts of it are inaccessible to foreign researchers.¹² Al Shabaab limits the use of the Internet, making it difficult for people to take and share photos that would allow for analysis and corroboration. As such, the way by which data was obtained for this research is common practice for foreigners working in Somalia: translators and community leaders liaise with drivers to bring interviewees to a secure location where the interviews are conducted. Even if interviews happen over the course of hours, days or weeks, there always remains a lack of full contextual understanding.

Second, there are no known civil society organizations tracking US airstrikes or allegations of civilian harm in Somalia itself. This means there is no national-level repository of information to which to refer. Compounding this, there are several linguistic and cultural barriers, including the fact that many Somalis from rural areas do not follow the Western calendar, which make it difficult to pinpoint the precise date or even the year in which they experienced a specific strike. This further complicates the process of tying a particular claim to a specific US operation. However, these issues do not interfere with the overall aim of this report, which – rather than fact finding – is to get a sense of the broader impact the airstrikes have on the civilian population of Jubbaland.

Third, there is the question of whether the attacks interviewees are referring to are indeed operations carried out by the US, as Kenya periodically conducts operations in this area as well. However, Kenyan airstrikes are infrequent and tend to occur along the Kenya-Somalia border.¹³ According to Airwars data, the US has carried out 110 strikes in Jubbaland, 90 of which were carried out between 2017-21. Airwars further classified 35 strikes as ‘contested’, meaning that there are ‘competing claims of responsibility’, for instance because there are both reports that identify the US military as having carried out the strike and the Kenyan military. Since 2007, there have been 25 strikes that were not confirmed by the Kenyan army, but where local sources mentioned Kenya.¹⁴ For the airstrikes discussed

¹² Bertelsmann Stiftung, *Somalia Country Report 2022* [website], <https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/SOM>, (accessed 23 September 2022); S. Raghavan,

‘An attack on a military base in Somalia shows al-Shabab’s deadly power’, *The Washington Post*, 17 July 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/07/17/somalia-al-shabab-us-troops/>, (accessed 14 August 2022).

¹³ No numbers are available as the Kenyan military does not publicly declare its airstrikes.

¹⁴ Email with Airwars, 11 October 2022.

in this report, both the higher number of US-conducted airstrikes and their location – many of them deep into Jubbaland territory rather than close to the border with Kenya and frequently corroborating with US statements on strikes – combine to suggest that the strikes reported by interviewees were in fact conducted by the US.¹⁵

3.3 Understanding 'civilian harm'

As this report is concerned with the broader human impact of strikes on civilians in Jubbaland, it is important to note that the negative impact of violent conflict on civilians is often far and wide reaching, taking many forms and affecting people in different ways and to differing degrees. PAX has studied civilian harm extensively in order to better grasp how conflict affects civilians and to identify the measures that are needed to better protect them.¹⁶ Two matters are crucial to researching civilian harm effectively: a clear definition and conceptual framework and a solid understanding of how civilian harm occurs and develops over time.

PAX has elsewhere put forward the following definition of civilian harm:

Negative effects on civilian personal or community well-being caused by use of force in hostilities. Effects can occur directly (death, physical or mental trauma, property damage) or indirectly through the destruction of critical infrastructure, disruption of access to basic needs and services, or the loss of livelihood.¹⁷

We further recognize a distinction between direct and reverberating civilian harm effects to better grasp how civilian harm occurs and develops over time. We use the following definitions:

1. **Direct effects:** the 'immediate and (usually) physical impact directly from the armed conflict'.¹⁸
2. **Reverberating effects:** 'those effects that are not necessarily caused directly by the attack, but are nonetheless a product thereof'.¹⁹ This includes displacement, loss of livelihood, stigmatization and so on.

This distinction, maintained throughout the report, enables us to more clearly study the relationship between cause (use of force) and effect (civilian harm) and anything that occurs in between, so that we can learn how civilian harm develops over time and how certain forms of civilian harm interconnect with others, often creating an overall worse outcome for those affected.

15 It is worth noting that the US provides substantial support to the Kenyan military. In 2020, US peace and security assistance totaled over 560 million USD and Kenya has purchased over 139 million USD worth of US-made military equipment over the past three years. Additionally, Since 2017, the United States has provided 19 million USD in counterterrorism assistance to Kenya, according to the State department. See: U.S. Department of State, 'The United States and Kenya: Strategic Partners' [Factsheet], 16 November 2021, <https://www.state.gov/the-united-states-and-kenya-strategic-partners-2/#:~:text=The%20United%20States%20provided%20over,humanitarian%20assistance%20in%20FY%202021,> (accessed 5 October 2022).

16 See, for instance, E. Bijl, W. Wels, and W. van der Zeijden, *On Civilian Harm*, Utrecht, PAX, 2021; S. Azeem et al., *After the strike: Exposing the civilian harm effects of the 2015 Dutch airstrike on Hawija* [report], PAX, 2022.

17 E. Bijl and W. van der Zeijden, *Civilian harm tracking, analysis and response: What it is and why it matters* [position paper], PAX, 2020, 4.

18 S. Holewinski et al., *Beyond Casualty Counts: Building Dynamic Models to Capture and Foresee Civilian Harm* [white paper], Frontlines Lab, 2021, 5.

19 E. Nohle and I. Robinson, 'War in Cities: The Reverberating Effects of Explosive Weapons', *Humanitarian Law and Policy* [blog], 2 March 2017, <https://blogs.icrc.org/law-and-policy/2017/03/02/war-in-cities-the-reverberating-effects-of-explosive-weapons/> (accessed 28 August 2022).

4. Somalia: Conflict and Al Shabaab

This chapter provides background to the wider conflict in Somalia and the conflict dynamics in Jubbaland specifically, also discussing Al Shabaab, its motivations, activities and how it is a part of Somali and Jubbaland society. US military presence in Somalia and related allegations of civilian harm are discussed in chapter 5.

4.1 Conflict context: Somalia

Somalia has been in a state of civil conflict since the 1980s when a resistance movement emerged against Siad Barre, who had ruled the country for more than two decades.²⁰ In 1991, clan-based opposition groups overthrew the Mogadishu government and the central state collapsed.²¹ Subsequently, Somalia divided into fiefdoms run by warlords, which were largely based on clan structure and which competed – often violently – with each other for power and resources.²² The Islamic Courts Union (ICU) emerged in this chaos around the year 2000 and managed to exert a semblance of order across the competing brokers, operating with a degree of validity until late 2006.²³

In the period after the 9/11 attacks in 2001, the US was eager to combat what it considered could become violent political Islam. At the end of 2006, the US became concerned that the ICU, in the context of a non-traditional, informal state, could allow Somalia to become a haven for terrorists, and it supported its regional ally Ethiopia to invade Somalia and take down the ICU.²⁴

Ethiopia and Somalia have a long-standing enmity and the invasion infuriated and disgraced many Somalis and toppled the ICU while creating space for its hardline elements to legitimize and morph into Al Shabaab.²⁵

20 Tufts University, *Mass Atrocity Endings: Somalia, Fall of Siad Barre and the civil war* [website], <https://sites.tufts.edu/atrocityendings/2015/08/07/somalia-fall-of-siad-barre-civil-war/>, 7 August 2015 (accessed 10 July 2022).

21 N. Henry, 'Rebels force Somali leader out of capital', *The Washington Post*, 1 January 1991, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1991/01/01/rebels-force-somali-leader-out-of-capital/7e7267ef-139c-4108-bf67-73687a26a243/>, (accessed 10 July 2022).

22 Voice of America, 'Siad Barre's Fall Blamed for Somalia's Collapse into Civil War', *Voice of America*, 31 January 2011, <https://www.voanews.com/a/siad-barre-fall-led-into-civil-war-020111-115008454/134345.html>, (accessed 10 July 2022).

23 Stanford Center for International Security and Cooperation, *Islamic Courts Union* [website], <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/islamic-courts-union>, (accessed 13 July 2022); Harvard Divinity School, *The Islamic Courts Union* [website], <https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/faq/islamic-courts-union>, (accessed 13 July 2022).

24 M. Mazzetti, 'U.S. Signals Backing for Ethiopian Incursion Into Somalia', *The New York Times*, 27 December 2006, <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/27/world/africa/27africa.html>, (accessed 10 July 2022).

25 S. Wilkins, 'Buried in the Sands of the Ogaden: Lessons from an Obscure Cold War Flashpoint in Africa', *War on the Rocks*, 6 September 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/09/buried-in-the-sands-of-the-ogaden-lessons-from-an-obscure-cold-war-flashpoint-in-africa/>, (accessed 11 July 2022).

Somalia's civil war evolved with the addition of internationally backed counterterrorism operations while, simultaneously, Al Shabaab has become an important element of Somali society and governance. In the early and mid-aughts, it held large portions of the country, but was pushed back by troops from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) around 2011, recently renamed the African Union Transitional Mission in Somalia (ATMIS).²⁶ In the years following the initial AMISOM push, the Somali government, which had been operating in exile, was able to take its seat in the capital. This was followed by the formation of the federal member states, including Jubbaland, and the blueprint of a constitution.

At large, the process of Somali state building has been supported by billions of dollars funded by foreign states and organizations.²⁷ Al Shabaab has waged a war against the international community and its supporters, especially targeting Somali government officials and civil servants and bodies like the African Union (AU) troops. The group has steadily attacked and bombed hotels, restaurants and other public spaces frequented by Somali politicians. High-profile attacks in Mogadishu include the killing of twenty people at a medical school graduation in 2009, the execution of two truck bombings in October 2017 which killed over 500 people, the infiltration of the compound of the mayor in 2019 whereby Al Shabaab killed him and various others and, as recent as October 2022, killing over 100 civilians in a twin bombing.²⁸ The organization has also regularly targeted young Somali entrepreneurs and activists.²⁹

Most of Al Shabaab's high profile assaults have been in Mogadishu, but other key cities like Jubbaland's capital, Kismayo, have not been spared.³⁰ Major attacks were also carried out in Kenya and Uganda, key troop contributing countries for the AU.³¹ In early 2020, Al Shabaab attacked a US base in northern Kenya, killing three Americans.³²

26 France24, 'Militias pushed back in Mogadishu', *France24*, 6 March 2011, <https://www.france24.com/en/20110306-somalia%E2%80%99-government-african-union-forces-push-back-militia>, (accessed 11 July 2022).

27 A. Sperber, 'Somalia is a Country Without an Army', *Foreign Policy*, 7 August 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/08/07/somalia-is-a-country-without-an-army-al-shabab-terrorism-horn-africa-amisom/>, (accessed 10 July 2022).

28 CNN, 'Blast kills 19 at graduation ceremony in Somalia', *CNN*, 4 December 2009, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/africa/12/03/somalia.attacks/>, (accessed 11 July 2022); E. Sullivan, 'Mogadishu Truck Bomb's Death Toll Now Tops 500, Probe Committee Says', 2 December 2017, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/12/02/567985077/mogadishu-truck-bombs-death-toll-now-tops-500-probe-committee-says?t=1660808296174>, (accessed 15 July 2022); M. Weaver, 'Mayor of Mogadishu dies as result of al-Shabaab attack', *The Guardian*, 1 August 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/01/mayor-of-mogadishu-dies-as-result-of-al-shabaab-attack-somalia>, (accessed 15 July 2022); The New Arab, 'Somalis search through wreckage of Al Shabaab twin bombing to find loved ones', *The New Arab*, 30 October 2022, <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/news/somalis-search-loved-ones-wreckage-al-shabaab-bomb>, (accessed 31 October 2022).

29 A. L. Dahir, 'The short life of an inspiring entrepreneur will keep giving hope to the troubled city he loved', *Quartz Africa*, 5 August 2018, <https://qz.com/africa/1348564/somalias-first-florist-mohamed-mohamoud-sheik-ali-killed-in-mogadishu/>, (accessed 15 July 2022).

30 O. Nor, Z. Mahmood and E. Dixon, 'Death toll in Somalia hotel attack rises to 26', *CNN*, 13 July 2019, <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/07/13/africa/somalia-hotel-attack-intl/index.html>, (accessed 15 July 2022); M. Dhaysane, 'Somalia Bombings Kill 4, Wound 11', *Voice of America*, 9 August 2022, Somalia Bombings Kill 4, Wound 11 (voanews.com) (accessed 11 August 2022); M. O. Hassan, 'Explosion Kills Three Soccer Players in Somalia's Kismayo', *Voice of America*, 30 July 2021, https://www.voanews.com/a/africa_explosion-kills-three-soccer-players-somalias-kismayo/6208951.html, (accessed 15 July 2022); *Al Jazeera*, 'Several killed in suicide bombing outside mosque in Somalia', *Al Jazeera*, 11 September 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/9/11/several-killed-in-suicide-bombing-outside-mosque-in-somalia>, (accessed 15 July 2022).

31 B. Cat and D. Graham, 'Westgate mall attack in 60 seconds', *BBC*, 21 September 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-africa-29247163>, (accessed 19 August 2022); M. Bearak, 'Gunmen storm Nairobi hotel in terrorist attack claimed by Somali militants', *The Washington Post*, 15 January 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/gunfire-and-explosions-rock-nairobi-hotel-in-possible-terrorist-attack/2019/01/15/854acb86-18c6-11e9-88fe-f9f77a3bcb6c_story.html, (accessed 19 August 2022); X. Rice, 'Uganda bomb blast kills at least 74', *BBC*, 12 July 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jul/12/uganda-kampala-bombs-explosions-attacks>, (accessed 19 August 2022).

32 T. Gibbons-Neff et al., 'Chaos as Militants Overran Airfield, Killing 3 Americans in Kenya', *The New York Times*, 22 January 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/22/world/africa/shabab-kenya-terrorism.html>, (accessed 19 August 2022).

4.2 Conflict context: Jubbaland

Jubbaland is one of six federal member states in Somalia. It was formed in 2013 and has its own autonomous administration. It forms the most southern part of the nation, its eastern coast running the Indian Ocean and its wide southwest flank bordering Kenya. The current President of Jubbaland is Ahmed Mohamed Islam, known as ‘Madobe’, who has ruled the territory even before it was a formal state and who is a former ICU member.³³ There is a close relationship between Jubbaland and neighboring Kenya, but Jubbaland has a confrontational relationship with the federal government in Mogadishu. This opposition is related to long-standing, intricate clan and sub-clan disputes over control of Kismayo, the lucrative state capital by the sea.

Madobe’s close relationship with Kenya and his oppositional relationship with the Somali capital are relevant because the US treats Kenya as a key ally in the ‘War on Terror’ in the Horn of Africa, and conducts much of its operations in Somalia via its alliance with Kenya. This dynamic directly and indirectly impacts Jubbaland’s relationship with the US. As one Somali official put it, ‘[The] Americans have the best ally of the “War on Terror” in Ahmed Madobe.’³⁴ The tone set by Madobe is one that is friendly to counterterror operations, reportedly giving the US a lot of latitude in the state, meaning it can carry out its operations without much scrutiny.

Politics in Jubbaland and Somalia overall are extremely fraught, especially among elites. In recent years, this has empowered Al Shabaab to take back large swaths of territory it lost earlier to AMISOM.³⁵ The situation is fluid but Al Shabaab controls the vast majority of the state’s three regions: Gedo, Middle Jubba and Lower Jubba. Barring main towns, it holds most of Gedo, the entirety of Middle Jubba, also the group’s national stronghold, and most of Lower Jubba, except for Kismayo, though it does control the arteries to the capital. In Jubbaland, as in Somalia overall, the group exists as a violent, oppressive and omnipresent insurgent body that is largely disliked by Somali civilians who are frustrated by its tax system and seemingly arbitrary, often violent laws, but who may also consider the group the most trusted judicial body in the country.³⁶ The group has a complete hold on the population and harbors no dissent: ‘Even if you do not like them, you cannot show that you do not like them. You are either with them, or you are not.’³⁷

In some parts of Jubbaland, specifically Middle Jubba, Al Shabaab is the only government most civilians have known in decades. Many detest them but their presence is felt and provides order, especially as the group provides basic services in rural areas.³⁸ The internationally-backed government, meanwhile, may feel irrelevant and is renowned for corruption.³⁹ In much of Jubbaland, Al Shabaab has district offices, courts and police and a political structure. In other areas it does not necessarily directly govern but keeps a strong intelligence presence. These areas are controlled by clans who act as governing entities from both Al Shabaab and the state of Somalia and who both

33 A. Hassan, ‘Somali region re-elects former warlord to fight al Shabaab’, *Reuters*, 15 August 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-somalia-elections/somali-region-re-elects-former-warlord-to-fight-al-shabaab-idUSKCN0QK0GV20150815>, (12 August 2022).

34 Whatsapp conversation with Somali official, 22 March 2022.

35 International Crisis Group, *Considering Political Engagement With Al-Shabaab in Somalia* [report], 2022.

36 International Crisis Group, *Considering Political Engagement*.

37 Phone call with expert, 7 May 2022.

38 International Crisis Group, *Considering Political Engagement*.

39 From 2007 to 2020, Somalia’s government was consistently ranked last in Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index.

work with Al Shabaab or fight the group, depending on the situation. 'Their presence is felt but you will hardly see a large group of them in one place but their control is felt because of their strong fist,' according to an expert.⁴⁰ Even in areas that Al Shabaab no longer physically controls, it often functions as a shadow government, collecting taxes and providing services like Islamic courts.⁴¹

Al Shabaab also inserts itself into vying clan dynamics in the areas it controls and in government-held territory: 'All clans align themselves with Al Shabaab depending on what they want to achieve at any given moment.'⁴² Simultaneously, Al Shabaab uses clan elders to manage and control the populations, reportedly even having a department that deals specifically with Al Shabaab relations with clan elders.⁴³

On the edges of this intricate landscape are small pockets of government-held areas, which are mostly main cities and towns and some of their surrounding areas. Here too, Al Shabaab exerts a considerable amount of influence, acting as a controlling governing body through its intelligence capabilities and ability to exert threat of brutal force. For example, its robust tax system also takes greatly from the cities understood to be held by the government and because it holds many of the checkpoints that are arteries to the more densely populated areas around Somalia, it ultimately has a handle on the flow of people, goods and weapons throughout the country.⁴⁴

Al Shabaab and civilians in Jubbaland have a labyrinthine relationship. Even as the group is embedded in society and is often accepted as the *de facto* controller, especially in matters of justice, most civilians do not appreciate the organization's fundamentalist rule and are frustrated by the high taxes it levies. Al Shabaab fighters may be in uniform and its bureaucrats often move from location to location, but the group also employs a robust network of spies, creating an atmosphere of suspicion and instability in village life and a state of compliance with the group because everyone fears getting reported for being seen as acting against Al Shabaab interests or working with the government.⁴⁵

40 Phone call with expert, 7 May 2022.

41 United Nations Security Council, 'Letter dated 7 November 2018 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea addressed to the President of the Security Council', S/2018/1002, United Nations Security Council, 9 November 2018.

42 Whatsapp conversation with expert, 27 July 2022

43 M. Mubarak, 'Taming the Clans: Al-Shabab's Clan Politics', *Hiraal Institute* [blog], <https://hiraalinstitute.org/taming-the-clans-al-shababs-clan-politics/>, (accessed 3 September 2022).

44 M. Mubarak, 'A Losing Game: Countering Al-Shabab's Financial System', *Hiraal Institute* [blog], <https://hiraalinstitute.org/a-losing-game-countering-al-shababs-financial-system/>, (accessed 3 September 2022); M. Harper, 'Somalia conflict: Al-Shabab "collects more revenue than government"', *BBC*, 26 October 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-54690561>, (accessed 18 August 2022); K. Houreld, 'Elaborate Somali insurgent tax systems collects almost as much as government', *Reuters*, 27 October 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/somalia-security/elaborate-somali-insurgent-tax-system-collects-almost-as-much-as-government-idUSKBN27C1P0>, (accessed 18 August 2022).

45 Z.A. nor Kheyre, 'The evolution of the Al-Shabaab Jihadist intelligence structure', *Intelligence and National Security*, 2022.

5. US military operations and civilian harm

This section describes the extent of US military involvement, presence and operations in Somalia. It goes into allegations and estimations of US-caused civilian casualties and outlines some of the weaknesses that have been identified regarding US transparency and response in this area.

5.1 US military presence in Somalia

US military activity in Somalia grew in the wake of its 'War on Terror'. Soon after the 9/11 attacks, the US began supporting secular Somali warlords, many of whom played a role in the 1991 collapse of the state.⁴⁶ The US' involvement in Somalia grew significantly in 2006 when it financially and militarily supported Ethiopia's invasion to bring down the ICU.⁴⁷ In 2007, the first known airstrikes were carried out in what is now Jubbaland state.⁴⁸

Current US military involvement in Somalia consists of training of Somali forces, provision of intelligence and most notably, carrying out airstrikes against suspected Al Shabaab members.⁴⁹ Where it concerns Jubbaland, the US trains the Jubbaland-based wing of Danab, the special forces that are part of the Somali National Army (SNA).⁵⁰ The US further supports the Jubbaland arm of the National Intelligence and Security Agency.⁵¹ The main US security actor in Somalia is the

46 D. Morgan, 'US funding Somali warlords, intelligence experts say', *Reuters*, 5 June 2006, <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/us-funding-somali-warlords-intelligence-experts-say>, (accessed 21 August 2022).

47 X. Rice and S. Goldenberg, 'How US forged an alliance with Ethiopia over invasion', *The Guardian*, 13 January 2007, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/jan/13/alqaida.usa>, (accessed 20 August 2022).

48 J. Gettleman, 'More Than 50 Die in U.S. Strikes in Somalia', *The New York Times*, 9 January 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/09/world/africa/09cnd-somalia.html>, (accessed 14 August 2022).

49 Amnesty International, *The Hidden US War*.

50 H. Strobel, 'U.S. Forces work alongside African military members', 2 February 2021 [image], <https://www.africom.mil/image/33455/us-forces-work-alongside-african-military-members>, (accessed 14 August 2022); D. S. Correll, 'AFRICOM predicts mission training Somalia's 'Lightning Brigade' will last until 2027', *Military Times*, 17 March 2020, <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2020/03/17/africom-predicts-mission-training-somalias-lightning-bridgade-will-last-until-2027/>, (accessed 14 August 2022).

51 K. Sieff, 'Exclusive: U.S.-funded Somali intelligence agency has been using kids as spies', *The Washington Post*, 7 May 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/exclusive-us-funded-somali-intelligence-agency-has-been-using-kids-as-spies/2016/05/06/974c9144-0ce3-11e6-a6b6-2e6de3695b0e_story.html, (accessed 15 August 2022).

US Africa Command (AFRICOM), although the CIA is known to carry out covert operations in the country as well.⁵²

The US military has two high-profile bases in Somalia, one of which is in Kismayo, Jubbaland's capital.⁵³ Somalis interviewed by PAX hypothesize that the US carries out its airstrikes from a number of bases, including the US base in Manda Bay, Kenya, just south of Jubbaland, as well as Baledogle, the main American base outside Mogadishu. The US further has a permanent military base in Djibouti, north of Somalia, but it is unclear to what extent it plays a role in US operations in Jubbaland.

US ground forces in Somalia were withdrawn from the country as of January 2021, but training of partner forces, special operations and airstrikes have since continued.⁵⁴ In May 2022, it was reported that the Biden administration had decided to redeploy US troops to Somalia in the near future.⁵⁵

5.2 US airstrikes and allegations of civilian harm

Airpower is a key element of US operations to combat Al Shabaab.⁵⁶ In the first months of 2017, then-President Trump declared large parts of Somalia 'areas of active hostilities' via a directive, which relaxed the rules put in place under his predecessor to protect civilians. Under the previous Obama administration (2009-17), suspected Al Shabaab members could be targeted in airstrikes if they were judged to pose a direct threat against the US itself; airstrikes at the time mostly concerned operations against so-called High Value Targets. Trump's new mandate permitted AFRICOM to use lethal force against all Al Shabaab members, regardless of whether they presented a direct threat. The new mandate also required less coordination between military and intelligence agencies prior to conducting a strike.⁵⁷ As a result, Somalia quickly experienced a spike in airstrikes, reaching a record high in 2019 (see *Figure 2*).⁵⁸ A former Somali official described the situation as the US having been given a 'blank check' regarding airstrikes.⁵⁹

52 J. Scahill, 'The CIA's Secret Sites in Somalia', *The Nation*, 10 December 2014, <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/cias-secret-sites-somalia/>, (accessed 20 August 2022); D. Welsh, E. Schmitt and J. E. Barnes, 'A C.I.A. Fighter, a Somali Bomb Maker, and a Faltering Shadow War', *The New York Times*, 24 October 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/24/world/africa/al-shabab-somalia-us-cia.html>, (accessed 20 August 2022).

53 The Kismayo base was not public until a Foreign Policy investigation in 2015 revealed there was a team of about 40 special operators from the Joint Special Operations Command flying armed drones and carrying out counterterrorism activities in the area. See T. McCormick, 'Exclusive: U.S. Operates Drones From Secret Bases in Somalia', *Foreign Policy*, 2 July 2015, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/07/02/exclusive-u-s-operates-drones-from-secret-bases-in-somalia-special-operations-jsoc-black-hawk-down/>, (accessed 20 August 2022); N. Turse, 'Pentagon's own map of U.S. bases in Africa contradicts its claim of "light" footprint', *The Intercept*, 27 February 2020, <https://theintercept.com/2020/02/27/africa-us-military-bases-africom/>, (accessed 20 August 2022).

54 O. Hathaway and L. Hartig, 'Still at War: The United States in Somalia', *Just Security* [blog], 31 March 2022, <https://www.justsecurity.org/80921/still-at-war-the-united-states-in-somalia/>, (accessed 30 August 2022).

55 C. Savage and E. Schmitt, 'Biden Approves Plan to Redeploy Several Hundred Ground Forces Into Somalia', *The New York Times*, 16 May 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/16/us/politics/biden-military-somalia.html>, (accessed 30 August 2022).

56 The US is known to use MQ1-Predators, MQ9-Reapers and a variety of laser-guided and GPS-guided aircraft bombs. See Amnesty International, *The Hidden US War*, 31-32.

57 Under President Biden there has been a return to stricter rules on drone strikes as part of counterterrorism operations, whereby use of lethal force against suspected terrorists outside war zones again requires presidential approval. See: Voice of America, 'New Biden Counterterror Strategy Puts Limits on Drone Use', *Voice of America*, 8 October 2022, <https://www.voanews.com/a/new-biden-counterterror-strategy-puts-limits-on-drone-use-/6781373.html>, (accessed 10 October 2022).

58 Amnesty International, *Deadly Assistance: The role of European States in US drone strikes* [report], 2018.

59 A. Sperber, 'Inside the Secretive US Air Campaign In Somalia', *The Nation*, 7 February 2019, <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/somalia-secret-air-campaign/>, (accessed 1 September 2022).

YEAR	2011-14	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Airstrikes: Somalia	9	7	19	38	49	61	54	12
Airstrikes: Jubbaland	3	1	8	13	14	25	28	3
a) Middle Juba	2	0	4	6	4	18	21	2
b) Lower Juba	1	0	4	6	10	7	7	1
c) Gedo	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0

FIGURE 2 The number of US airstrikes per year, as declared by AFRICOM (Source: Airwars)

Many AFRICOM airstrikes in Somalia are reported to be carried out in ‘collective self-defense’ of Somali forces combating Al Shabaab. This has come with some criticism from experts, however, who allege that many such airstrikes resemble close air support to the SNA rather than being strictly defensive.⁶⁰

As the number of airstrikes increased, so did allegations of civilian casualties and reports of displacement and other civilian harm effects caused by US operations. Allegations have mainly been raised on social media like Twitter and Facebook, in Somali media or through journalists and international civil society organizations. While AFRICOM has so far acknowledged killing five and injuring eleven Somali civilians, non-governmental sources provide much higher numbers.⁶¹ For instance, monitoring organization Airwars estimates that the US has caused between 78-153 civilian fatalities, while New America puts this number at between 33-120.⁶²

Civilian casualty allegations from the Somali conflict have generally not received as much attention in the US and internationally as compared to US-caused civilian casualty incidents in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. However, a few cases have made international headlines. One of the first more comprehensive investigations concerns the Amnesty International report ‘The Hidden US War’, in which researchers conducted thorough investigations into five incidents in Lower Shabelle, concluding that there was credible evidence that US operations had resulted in the deaths of fourteen civilians, as well as having injured eight.⁶³

Two strikes carried out in February 2020 in Middle Jubba also attracted international attention: Following one strike, well-known Somali reporter Mohamed Osman Abdi published on social media that his 18-year-old niece had been killed and that two other nieces and his mother-in-law were badly injured.⁶⁴ Following a critical Human Rights Watch investigation, AFRICOM later acknowledged that the victims had indeed been civilians.⁶⁵ In the other incident, a high-profile

60 S. Harrison, ‘What the White House Use of Force Policy Means for the War in Somalia’, *Just Security* [blog], 20 October 2022, <https://www.justsecurity.org/83642/white-house-use-of-force-policy-and-somalia/>, (accessed 21 October 2022).

61 Airwars, *US Forces in Somalia* [website], <https://airwars.org/conflict/us-forces-in-somalia/>, (accessed 16 August 2022).

62 Airwars, *US Forces in Somalia* [website], <https://airwars.org/conflict/us-forces-in-somalia/>, (accessed 15 August 2022); New America, *The War in Somalia* [website], <https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/reports/americas-counterterrorism-wars/the-war-in-somalia/>, (accessed 15 August 2022).

63 Amnesty International, *The Hidden US War*.

64 A. Sperber, ‘U.S. Airstrikes Have Torn Somali Families Apart. They’re Still Seeking Justice’, *VICE News*, 22 July 2021, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/m7exg8/us-airstrikes-have-torn-somali-families-apart-theyre-still-seeking-justice>, (accessed 29 August 2022).

65 U.S. Africa Command Public Affairs, ‘Civilian Casualty Assessment Quarterly Report, Third Quarter, 2020’ [press release], 28 July 2020, U.S. Africa Command, <https://www.africom.mil/pressrelease/33045/us-africa-command-civilian-casualty-assessment-quarterly-report-third-quarter-2020>, (accessed 16 August 2022).



FIGURE 3 Declared US airstrikes in Jubaland and related confirmed and alleged civilian casualty incidents (Data source: Airwars).

SOMALIA

Declared US strikes in Jubbaland and confirmed and alleged civilian casualty incidents



- 1 strike
- 2-5 strikes
- 10-20 strikes

-
- US operations with no reports of civilian casualties
 - US operations with confirmed civilian casualties
 - US operations with allegations of civilian casualties deemed 'credible' by Airwars
 - US operations with allegations of civilian casualties deemed 'weak' or 'contested' by Airwars

businessman was among the fatalities. Telecom company Hormuud, his employer, later put out a statement to Reuters that the deceased man was a civilian.⁶⁶ Following research, Amnesty International came to the same conclusion.⁶⁷ AFRICOM, however, insists that he was a member of Al Shabaab.⁶⁸

Based on statements by our interviewees, there are two main ways in which civilians are killed or injured in US airstrikes. Civilians may get harmed if they are present near the intended target when the US military carries out its strikes. This may occur, for example, when a strike targets a moving vehicle with Al Shabaab members in it, with civilians ending up hurt by flying shrapnel. Alternatively, the US may wrongly consider someone to be an Al Shabaab combatant. Interviewees, for instance, related that men and boys got targeted whom they knew from their communities and who they believed were not Al Shabaab members. This is discussed in greater detail in chapters 6 and 8.

5.3 US investigations, response and accountability

AFRICOM has a system in place to track and investigate civilian casualties from own operations. Whenever there is a suspicion of civilian casualties, AFRICOM has operational task forces to conduct an investigation. Information about casualty incidents can come from self-reporting by military units, combat assessments, reporting by non-governmental organizations or from (affected) civilians.⁶⁹ First, AFRICOM conducts an initial assessment to verify whether the date and location of the incident correspond to a US action. If this is the case, the military completes a Civilian Casualty Assessment Report, which contains information about the incident, as well as documentation supporting its conclusions, such as full motion video. When AFRICOM comes to its conclusion, for instance that an allegation is ‘credible’ meaning that it is more likely than not that civilians were killed or injured as a result of US military action, it publishes its determination on its website and – since March 2020 – in its quarterly civilian casualty assessment report.⁷⁰

Researchers and civil society organizations have, over the years, identified several flaws and limitations in this system, not only in relation to AFRICOM but also with regards to US military practice overall. First, AFRICOM generally uses aircraft to assess the damage at the target site after a strike has been conducted. However, such overhead surveillance has its limitations as it cannot record damage below an opaque surface, such as a collapsed roof or building. As such, overhead surveillance does not record the bodies of people trapped or buried under rubble. Likewise, overhead surveillance by itself is often not enough to determine a target’s status as civilian or combatant.⁷¹ Second, there are no requirements in the AFRICOM assessment procedure to consult non-military sources during an investigation. This means that valuable information is

66 K. Houreld, ‘Somalia telecoms employee killed by U.S. air strike, company’, *Reuters*, 25 February 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-somalia-security/somalia-telecoms-employee-killed-by-u-s-air-strike-company-idUSKBN20I26S>, (accessed 16 August 2022).

67 Amnesty International, ‘Somalia: Zero accountability’.

68 U.S. Africa Command Public Affairs, ‘Civilian Casualty Assessment Quarterly Report, Third Quarter, 2020’.

69 M.J. McNerney et al., *U.S. Department of Defense Civilian Casualty Policies and Procedures: An Independent Assessment* [report], RAND, 2022.

70 M.J. McNerney et al., *U.S. Department of Defense Civilian Casualty Policies and Procedures; U.S. Africa Command, Civilian Casualty Report* [website], <https://www.africom.mil/civilian-casualty-report>, (accessed 15 August 2022).

71 A. Khalifaoui et al., *In Search of Answers: U.S. Military Investigations and Civilian Harm* [report], Center for Civilians in Conflict and Columbia Law School Human Rights Institute, 2020.

often overlooked. Indeed, the Center for Civilians in Conflict and the Columbia Law School Human Rights Institute found that between 2016-19 not a single civilian witness was interviewed or a single site visit conducted in any investigation of civilian casualty allegations in Somalia.⁷² Third, civil society organizations and activists have expressed frustration at the lack of direct channels of communication between AFRICOM and Somali civilians, through which the latter can directly report civilian casualty allegations.⁷³

In April 2020, AFRICOM addressed criticism regarding that latter point by instituting a civilian casualty reporting mechanism through which (affected) civilians and civil society could raise claims for investigation.⁷⁴ However, the mechanism continues to suffer from flaws, such as the fact that its digital-only existence makes it difficult to access for many Somalis who live in rural areas without access to a solid internet connection.⁷⁵ Moreover, it is unclear to what extent the people who raise claims are receiving appropriate follow up: PAX research on this topic indicated that several Somalis who had managed to use the system had not heard back from AFRICOM, receiving neither answers, acknowledgement, nor reparations.⁷⁶

Regarding accountability and transparency, there are further issues to note. First, while AFRICOM publishes press releases on some of its strikes, it does not automatically disclose all of them. As such, information on certain strikes only became public after Freedom of Information Act requests. Consequently, the total number of strikes being carried out by the US in Somalia remains unknown to the public.⁷⁷ Second, as mentioned before, a considerable discrepancy remains between US-acknowledged civilian casualties and the numbers alleged by organizations like Airwars. The previously raised investigative flaws make it likely that the US is not aware of and counting all Somali civilians it harms as a result of its operations. Up until and including the publication of the 2019 Amnesty International report 'The Hidden US War in Somalia', the US military claimed it had not caused a single civilian casualty in its operations in Somalia, despite this publication following a steep increase in strikes in the period 2017-18. Since then, AFRICOM has acknowledged – also retroactively – a handful of civilian fatalities and injuries, but these numbers continue to be much lower than those raised by civil society.

Finally, it is important to note that also in cases where the US military has admitted to causing civilian casualties, it has fallen short in providing meaningful response. In situations where AFRICOM has acknowledged civilian harm, it has not communicated this to the victims or relatives thereof, who often had to learn of this through AFRICOM's civilian casualty assessment reports.⁷⁸

72 A. Khalfaoui et al., *In Search of Answers*, 41.

73 A. Khalfaoui et al., *In Search of Answers*; Amnesty International, *The Hidden US War*; A. H. Ali, 'AFRICOM's Improved Civilian Casualty Reporting System Still Leaves Gaps for Somalia', *Just Security* [blog], 6 August 2020, <https://www.justsecurity.org/71854/africoms-improved-civilian-casualty-reporting-system-still-leaves-gaps-for-somalia/>, (accessed 29 August 2022).

74 D. R. Mahanty, 'Great Expectations: AFRICOM's New Quarterly Report on Civilian Casualties', *Just Security* [blog], 21 April 2020, <https://www.justsecurity.org/69785/great-expectations-africom-new-quarterly-report-on-civilian-casualties/>, (accessed 29 August 2022). For more information on the reporting channel, how it works and what its limitations are, see E. Bijl, *Civilian harm reporting mechanisms: A useful means to support monitoring and accountability?* [report], PAX, 2022.

75 E. Bijl, *Civilian harm reporting mechanisms*; A. H. Ali, 'AFRICOM's Improved Civilian Casualty Reporting System'.

76 E. Bijl, *Civilian harm reporting mechanisms*; E. Bijl and A. Henry, 'DoD Needs to Rethink its Civilian Casualty Reporting Mechanism', *Just Security* [blog], <https://www.justsecurity.org/81428/dod-needs-to-rethink-its-civilian-casualty-reporting-mechanism/>, (accessed 29 August 2022).

77 Amnesty International, *The Hidden US War*.

78 E. Bijl, *Civilian harm reporting mechanisms*.

Nor have 'credible' assessments ever resulted in *ex gratia* payments to the affected civilians or their families.⁷⁹ This in spite of the existence of a Congress-approved 3 million USD fund for *ex gratia* payments to victims of civilian casualty incidents.⁸⁰ US Defense officials have indicated that a main reason why payments in Somalia have not occurred, is a concern that such payments could be extorted by Al Shabaab and so be used to fund terrorist activities.⁸¹

79 A. Sperber, 'U.S. Airstrikes Have Torn Somali Families Apart'.

80 E. Bijl, *Civilian harm reporting mechanisms*; P. Magid, 'No Apologies: The U.S. Military Often Kills Civilians and Rarely Offers Compensation', *The Intercept*, 21 September 2021, <https://www.amec.org.za/war-on-terror/item/1720-no-apologies-the-us-military-often-kills-civilians-and-rarely-offers-compensation.html>, (accessed 30 August 2022).

81 E. Bijl, *Civilian harm reporting mechanisms*.

6. Direct civilian harm effects

In the data collected about the negative impact of US airstrikes on civilians in Jubbaland, a distinction can be made between direct and reverberating civilian harm effects. This chapter outlines the former. As clarified in chapter 3, PAX employs the following definition of direct effects: the immediate and (usually) physical impact directly from the armed conflict. This includes physical impact like deaths and injuries but, importantly, also non-physical impact, such as mental trauma. The findings are based on the experiences of civilians in the area. It is important to note here that Al Shabaab limits the use of mobile phones and the Internet, complicating the verification of these allegations. However, it is not the purpose of this report to verify allegations of civilian harm beyond a doubt, rather it is to recount civilian perspectives on the airstrikes and their reported wider impact on the Jubbaland population.

6.1 Allegations of civilian deaths and injuries

In Jubbaland, it can be difficult to distinguish between civilian and non-civilian casualties given the limited information available and the extent to which Al Shabaab is embedded in Jubbaland society, a matter which is discussed in greater detail in chapter 8. Nonetheless, interviewees report deaths and injuries of civilians from US airstrikes. Often, such reports come from relatives or affected civilians themselves. Airstrikes were either presumed to target Al Shabaab but ended up harming civilians in the vicinity or mistakenly targeted civilians. PAX interviewed a total of twenty persons who claim to have personally experienced airstrikes in Jubbaland. Among their accounts are several reports of civilian casualties. One respondent, for example, stated that ‘many civilians have been killed, but I cannot quantify,’⁸² whereas another interviewee was more precise in declaring that ‘a civilian in Koban was killed, a man called Aweys Omar, he was not a member of Al Shabaab.’⁸³ Among those reported killed and injured, are six children. One interviewee alleged that a strike had occurred outside of Berhani at around 2am, which he claimed killed a mother and child.⁸⁴ Someone else recounted how her neighbor’s home was demolished in a strike, reportedly killing two boys who were inside at the time.⁸⁵

In most cases, flying shrapnel particles caused the injuries or deaths. Shrapnel could cause a quick death but was also reported to result in prolonged suffering in some cases, for instance when the

82 Interview with a civilian, 23 March 2022.

83 Interview with a civilian, 22 March 2022.

84 Interview with a civilian, 26 March 2022.

85 Interview with a civilian, 27 March 2022.



FIGURE 4 Amburo partially lost her eyesight after she was injured by shrapnel from a US airstrike (© Amanda Sperber, 2022, picture taken with permission).

particles lodged in people's bodies caused infections. Some civilians became disabled as a result of the airstrikes.

Amburo's* experience is illustrative. She shared how she herself got injured and how two of her children, Mohamed and Ahmed, died in a strike on a village near Berhani, an area about 60 kilometers west of Kismayo. She estimates that this strike occurred about five years ago.⁸⁶ Amburo was at home when the strike hit, washing clothes. She heard aircraft moving in the sky and soon after a blast occurred at her homestead. Mohamed and Ahmed, one of them just two years old and the other even younger, still breastfeeding, were hit with shrapnel in the head and in the abdomen respectively. Amburo recalled that she was burned and shocked. She remembers that her children were crying, but that the sound became gradually quieter. She was badly injured in one eye and felt disoriented. She was brought to the hospital in Kismayo, but by the time she became fully cognizant again her sons had already been buried. Since the strike, Amburo said she 'feels pain and gets headaches'. She currently lives in a displacement camp in Kismayo and has not been home to her village since the strike. She has permanently lost her sight in one eye.

Amburo did not indicate what she thought the strike's intended target was, but she mentioned that there had been fighting the night before. Whether this was fighting between Al Shabaab and government forces, Al Shabaab and clan militia, or even between two clans not involving Al Shabaab at all, she did not specify. She also remembered that earlier in the day Al Shabaab had passed through her village, collecting tax in the form of livestock, but that she did not pay because she did not have cattle.⁸⁷

Jamilah* was injured in an airstrike in the Hosingow area of Lower Jubba, close to a Kenyan military base. It is unclear whether the US military or another actor, such as the Kenyan military, carried out the strike. According to Jamilah, the strike occurred sometime in 2018, but she is not sure what month.⁸⁸ Flying shrapnel wounded her so badly that she lost consciousness. After bleeding for three days, she was taken to the hospital in Kismayo, some 150 kilometers to the east of where she lived. According to Jamilah, two other people were injured in the attack: shrapnel wounded a boy in the foot and hit another person in the head who was 'cut in the eyes'. Jamilah reported that the strike, which did not appear to target her, occurred when she was bringing herds of cattle back to her homestead. She did not say if Al Shabaab were killed or if there was fighting around the time that the strike occurred, though she did say there was another airstrike in the vicinity two days before she was hit. Several years later, some shrapnel is still lodged in Jamilah's back, thighs and arms.

86 Most Somalis living in rural areas do not follow the Western calendar, which complicates the identification of specific strikes. The US carried out a strike near Berhani in December 2017, declaring to have killed eight terrorists and not reporting any civilian casualties. See U.S. Africa Command Public Affairs, 'U.S. Conducts Airstrike in Support of the Federal Government of Somalia' [press release], 18 December 2017, U.S. Africa Command, <https://www.africom.mil/pressrelease/30211/u-s-conducts-airstrike-in-support-of-the-federal-government-of-somalia>, (accessed 6 October 2022); Airwars, *Assessment USSOM110* [website], <https://airwars.org/civilian-casualties/ussom110-december-15-2017/>, (accessed 6 October 2022). It is uncertain whether the two strikes are the same.

87 Interview, 29 March 2022.

88 According to Airwars, there were allegations of civilian casualties in a "contested" strike in the vicinity of 2019. It is possible that Jamilah is referring to this strike even though she said 2018 as she does not follow the Western calendar. See: Airwars, *Assessment USSOM250a-C* [website], <https://airwars.org/civilian-casualties/ussom250a-c-october-3-2019/>, (accessed 8 October 2022).



FIGURE 5 Remaining shrapnel and marks left by shrapnel from a US airstrike in Jamilah's lower back (© Amanda Sperber, 2022, picture taken with permission).

She now walks slowly and needs to take regular breaks, which hinders her ability to make a living as a farmer and cleaner. She has been displaced since the strike.⁸⁹

People displaced from Musa Haji and Kham, both villages near Bar Sanguuni, about 40 kilometers north of Kismayo, recounted how they themselves or acquaintances were injured in strikes on their villages.⁹⁰ One man, Tawfiiq*, who was injured in Kham, was hospitalized for four months because of a shrapnel injury. He mentioned there was fighting between Al Shabaab and the SNA along the Jubba River while he was on his farm when an airstrike came from the direction of the Indian Ocean. Shrapnel became lodged in his leg and he passed out from the pain. When he came to, he was bleeding heavily. Using a piece of fabric to try to stop the bleeding in his leg, he called his uncle to pick him up. The next day he was driven to Kismayo for treatment, but the hospital did not have the capacity to help him. He was then brought to Digfer hospital – also called Erdoğan Hospital, which is the Somalia-Turkey Training and Research Hospital – in Mogadishu, where he stayed for four months. There, part of his leg had to be removed and replaced with metal. Like Jamilah, Tawfiiq continues to suffer physically years after the strike occurred. He has debilitating headaches and body aches but cannot afford pain relief medication like Panadol.⁹¹

89 Interview, 24 March 2022.

90 The US carried out an airstrike near Bar Sanguuni in January 2019 and March 2019. See U.S. Africa Command Public Affairs, 'Al-Shabaab Degraded by U.S., Federal Government of Somalia' [press release], 19 January 2019, U.S. Africa Command, <https://www.africom.mil/pressrelease/31458/al-shabaab-degraded-by-u-s-federal-government-of-somalia>, (accessed 6 October 2022); U.S. Africa Command Public Affairs, 'Federal Government of Somalia, U.S. target al-Shabaab terrorists', 14 March 2019, U.S. Africa Command, <https://www.africom.mil/PressRelease/31629/federal-government-of-somalia-u-s-target-al-shabaab-terrorists>, (accessed 6 October 2022). Airwars further recorded a single source claim of an alleged US airstrike in this area in May 2020. See Airwars, *Assessment USSOM307a* [website], <https://airwars.org/civilian-casualties/ussom307a-may-11-2020/>, (accessed 6 October 2022).

91 Interview, 27 March 2022.



FIGURE 6 Tawfiq's permanently injured leg as a result of shrapnel from a US airstrike (© Amanda Sperber, 2022, picture taken with permission).

According to a nurse in the Kismayo hospital, people regularly come to seek medical care for injuries related to airstrikes. She estimated to have treated about 30 patients in the last three years, but indicated that many more people were treated by other practitioners or arrived on days she was not working. The nurse requested to stay fully anonymous because of concerns that there could be Al Shabaab informants at the hospital, including among staff, another example of Al Shabaab's hold on Jubbaland.⁹²

92 Interview, 30 March 2022.

Limited availability of or access to proper medical care actually compound the harm that has occurred to many civilians: The Kismayo hospital, for instance, does not have the capacity to treat head injuries or conduct CT or MRI scans, meaning that certain patients need to be sent to Mogadishu for treatment. However, travel to Mogadishu – some 500 kilometers from Kismayo – is costly and something few people in this area can afford. A camp leader recounted the experiences of a boy who became partially paralyzed after shrapnel was lodged in his pelvic area. His relatives raised money for his treatment by reaching out to the diaspora and had collected enough to pay for a ticket to Mogadishu to receive treatment after two years.⁹³ Others cannot afford this at all, meaning that some wounds are left untreated, worsening people's situation and sometimes resulting in lifelong disabilities that could have been avoided had people been able to access proper medical care.⁹⁴

6.2 Mental trauma

An important, yet often overlooked form of civilian harm as a result of military operations is mental trauma. Our civilian interviewees consistently reported that the strikes have taken a significant mental toll on people. The airstrikes and continuously looming threat thereof have left civilians, children especially, with such indicators of mental trauma as fear of loud noises, chronic stress, a feeling of general despair and flashbacks.

A respondent from the village of Musa Haji shared that when there is aircraft circling in the sky, this causes widespread chaos and confusion as people do not know where to hide or who is going to be hit. When it hits, '[i]t feels like an earthquake.'⁹⁵ Another woman mimicked the chaos that comes with the arrival of aircraft with her hands and described being forced to duck and hide in the bush, crawling with her baby in her arms.⁹⁶

The trauma that comes from an attack often lingers. Aster* shared that people who have experienced airstrikes will continue to have flashbacks of burned homes, property and livestock whenever they hear aircraft circling.⁹⁷ Another woman said that when she hears planes her 'stomach burns' and she worries for her children and husband.⁹⁸ Asad Aden, a psychosocial support officer, confirmed that these are not isolated incidents: 'There are so many traumatized people, especially people who run away from Al Shabaab areas. Airstrikes [are] compounding trauma.' He further emphasized that children in particular suffer from flashbacks to moments when they experienced airstrikes and that there is an unaddressed need for mental health support: 'Injuries can heal, but mental health needs way more support.'⁹⁹

93 Interview, 27 March 2022.

94 The impact of carrying out operations in so-called 'rebel-held territory' and how this can worsen civilian harm outcomes is explored in greater detail in S. Azeem et al., *After the strike*.

95 Interview with a civilian, 22 March 2022.

96 Interview with a civilian, 27 March 2022.

97 Interview with a civilian, 26 March 2022.

98 Interview with a civilian, 22 March 2022.

99 Interview, 29 March 2022.

Other respondents spoke of people becoming mentally ill from the shock of experiencing an airstrike and its aftermath. Jamilah, who was injured in an airstrike, shared that her firstborn has been mentally altered as a consequence of that airstrike. He lives in the displacement camp with Jamilah, where he is tied up, something that is not unheard of in Somalia where people who are mentally ill are sometimes chained so they do not injure themselves or others.¹⁰⁰ Jamilah explained that after the strike, her son was sick for three days with a fever. His current wellbeing stands in marked contrast to the period before the airstrike, when he would support Jamilah by helping burn charcoal and milk their cattle. She feels as if she has lost her son.¹⁰¹

As people live in an environment where airstrikes itself may not be all that frequent, but where the threat of one is forever looming, this has a mental impact even beyond instances of aircraft flying overhead. Female interviewees related to PAX that they live in constant terror of death from the sky. A woman shared that mothers warn their children that they could be killed in a strike.¹⁰² As mothers, the airstrikes make things more difficult.¹⁰³ One respondent commented that the strikes add to the conflict-ridden state in which she and her family live. She spoke of already living amongst the noise of gunshots and grenades and said that the US drones, planes and bombing add to the environment of war.¹⁰⁴

The strikes have become an additional burden for mothers as managing the emotional fallout from the traumatizing impact of the strikes on children largely fall to them. And that fallout can be considerable: Exposure to violence, or the threat thereof, can negatively affect a child's learning, behavior and socio-emotional development. Without support, stress from having experienced violence can cause children to become scared, harm themselves, become aggressive, withdrawn or depressed.¹⁰⁵

6.3 Material damage

In interviews, local officials, civilians and former Al Shabaab members all reported that airstrikes have resulted in significant material damages, mostly related to livestock, farmland and means of transportation.

Mohmed Abdullahi Osman, the mayor of Afmadow, called the loss of livestock because of strikes a 'big issue', explaining how the strikes may directly hit livestock or how flying particles cause fatal wounds to animals.¹⁰⁶ A member of Danab, the Somali Special Forces, reported that 'attacks from Baledogle [a US military base] have hugely impacted the civilians in Bu'ale [a village in Middle Juba

100 E. Batha, 'Mentally ill tied to trees and left to die in Somalia', *Reuters*, 7 October 2013, <https://news.trust.org/item/20131007132825-oupwe/>, (accessed 11 October 2022); Human Rights Watch, 'Chained Like Prisoners': *Abuses Against People with Psychosocial Disabilities in Somaliland* [report], 2015; A. Mumin and T. Rhodes, 'Inside Somalia's mental health emergency', *The New Humanitarian*, 26 June 2019, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2019/06/26/somalia-mental-health-emergency>, (accessed 11 October 2022).

101 Interview, 24 March 2022.

102 Interview with a civilian, 24 March 2022.

103 Interview with a civilian, 24 March 2022.

104 Interview with a civilian, 23 March 2022.

105 UNICEF, 'Mental health needs of children and young people in conflict need to be prioritized, conference says' [press release], 5 July 2018, *UNICEF*, Mental health needs of children and young people in conflict need to be prioritized, conference says' [press release], 5 July 2022, (accessed 11 October 2022).

106 Phone interview, 2 April 2022.

controlled by Al Shabaab], namely killing camels and cattle.¹⁰⁷ A displaced woman reported that she lost twelve cows in a strike on Musa Haji village that hit right when she was walking with her cattle to pasture. Her animals were killed in the strike.¹⁰⁸ Hani* said that 25 goats were killed by shrapnel in a strike around Bar Sanguuni. She also said the attack burned the farm, ruining maize and grass. She said: 'They [the US] should not target farms because people depend on agriculture.' While she did not think that farms were deliberately targeted, she did emphasize how strikes could cause indirect damage.¹⁰⁹ 'They [the US] have killed children, donkeys, cattle and means of transport,' according to a woman from Qabi Sharif. She said that she thought civilians who have lost their livelihood, most frequently cattle, cows and donkey carts, should be compensated for their losses.

A person who was displaced from Pangani village mentioned having lost eighteen goats, while her brother had lost six cows in addition to several goats.¹¹⁰ Khadija* posited that livestock are killed in strikes so often because Al Shabaab uses them as tax revenue: Because of this, she suggested, the planes follow Al Shabaab when they collect taxes and this is when the strikes happen.¹¹¹ Besides the loss of livestock, material damage also comes from the destruction of agricultural property. The Danab officer commented that strikes have destroyed crops that grow along the Jubba River, including bananas, maize, beans and tomatoes. Civilians depend on these products in their own needs and in their livelihood, meaning that the impact of their destruction is considerable. Another respondent confirmed that the banana plantations on her farm in Bar Sanguuni were ruined by strikes.¹¹² This is significant because, as discussed in the next chapter, such material damages are often a cause of economic harm.

107 Interview, 20 March 2022. The Danab officer did not mention when the airstrikes were carried out on Bu'ale. AFRICOM has declared three airstrikes between 2016-20; Airwars has further recorded five "contested" strikes in this area and two strikes which were alleged by a single source each.

108 Interview with a civilian, 22 March 2022.

109 Interview with a civilian, 23 March 2022.

110 Interview with a civilian, 24 March 2022.

111 Interview with a civilian, 27 March 2022.

112 Interview with a civilian, 24 March 2022.

7. Reverberating civilian harm effects

This chapter builds on the previous one and describes the reverberating impact of US airstrikes in Jubbaland on civilians. In chapter 3, we provided the following definition of reverberating effects: those effects that are not necessarily caused directly by the attack but are nonetheless a product thereof. In this chapter, we reflect on three categories of reverberating harm: economic harm, displacement and social consequences in the form of stigmatization and retaliation. In-depth discussion of these negative impacts leads to a better understanding of how one instance of use of force can create ripple effects, ultimately affecting more civilians or in different ways.

7.1 Economic harm

Besides causing direct damage to material property, there are various ways through which US airstrikes have a long-lasting, negative economic impact on civilians in Jubbaland. For example when people have to deal with increased medical costs after having been injured, loss of income when a family breadwinner dies in an airstrike, loss of livelihood when disabilities prevent people from carrying out their profession or making a proper living or loss of income when the goods and property needed to make a living are destroyed in an airstrike. Injuries sustained in airstrikes have led to lifelong disabilities for some, impacting people's ability to work, move around easily and care for families. As such, physical wounds can become a financial strain as livelihood is impeded or money and time is spent to treat injuries. Flying shrapnel has killed livestock and destroyed carts that are used to carry charcoal: the two main elements of the Jubbaland economy.

Interviewees, reflecting on their own experiences and those of acquaintances, confirmed that economic harm as a result of US airstrikes is widespread. Jamilah*, who was injured in her back and thighs by shrapnel, has been disabled since the strike. She now moves slowly and needs to take regular breaks. Consequently, she struggles to do the work she might otherwise have done to earn a living: cleaning, transporting charcoal or farming. Additionally, Jamilah's eldest son, who developed severe mental problems after the strike and who was formerly a family breadwinner (see chapter 6), is now unable to support his mother.¹¹³

113 Interview, 24 March 2022.

Amburo, who has permanently lost sight in one eye after the airstrike, stated: 'I have lost my whole life. I cannot take care of my children, I cannot support my family.'¹¹⁴

A respondent from Qabi Sharif mentioned an incident in which a villager lost six donkey carts in a strike. The respondent commented that the carts had been sitting upright and that Al Shabaab fighters had moved past the carts a few moments before the strike.¹¹⁵ The destruction of the carts may seem like a trivial matter to some audiences, but many Somalis in rural areas depend on these carts in order to farm and sell goods and, as such, provide a living for themselves and their families.

Economic harm is further not merely about material impact. Civilians often stress how it is accompanied by feelings of shame, disillusionment and hopelessness. A former member of Al Shabaab who lost eighteen cows after airstrikes hit her village said that her father, a lifelong farmer, became emotionally crippled at the loss of the family livelihood. 'It was like it killed him,' she said of the economic devastation. 'Like it cut the center.' Her father died three days after the strike.¹¹⁶

7.2 Displacement

Airstrikes frequently lead to displacement. For instance because civilians lose the assets through which they make a living, forcing them to go elsewhere in search of economic opportunities. Sagal's* experience is illustrative: She was displaced after strikes on her home, an area called Koban in Middle Jubba, in which she lost her eighteen cows, subsequently becoming unable to make a living.¹¹⁷ She has ended up in a displacement camp, Dalxiska, in Kismayo, where she is currently dependent on paltry aid. At the time of the interview, this aid has become more scarce in the midst of increased extreme weather and a resulting drought.¹¹⁸ Sagal tries to earn a living by doing laundry: 'Now I wash clothes, including clothes with vomit and feces on it, and it was better to stay in the village. I made more money and had more dignity with the cows.'¹¹⁹

The mayor of a district in Lower Jubba, Afmadow, described how displacement such as Sagal's is not uncommon: 'A lot of families have lost livestock and then they move to the town [Kismayo] and they do not have anything in the town.'¹²⁰ Nonetheless, it is difficult to put a number on the extent to which US airstrikes contribute to displacement. Abdirahman Abdi Ahmed, the Jubbaland Minister for Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Relief, shared that while his ministry tracks causes for displacement, it does not employ a distinct category for airstrikes.¹²¹

114 Interview, 29 March 2022.

115 Interview with a civilian, 26 March 2022.

116 Interview, 22 March 2022.

117 Sagal said she was displaced after the strike "around" 2018. Airwars has recorded a "contested" strike in Sakow in September 2018 (see: Airwars, *Assessment USSOM145-C* [website], <https://airwars.org/civilian-casualties/ussom145-c-september-19-2018/>, (accessed 11 October 2021)). More recently, the US declared two strikes near Koban in January and April 2020 respectively.

118 M. Müller, '4 million Somalis in danger of starvation', *Deutsche Welle*, <https://www.dw.com/en/4-million-somalis-in-danger-of-starvation/av-61182067>, (accessed 12 September 2022).

119 Interview with a civilian, 22 March 2022.

120 Phone interview, 2 and 5 April 2022.

121 Interview, 27 March 2022.

Displacement as a reverberating effect is cause for concern because it is a difficult and, by itself, harmful situation to be in: Displacement robs people of their homes, routines and communities, but it also uproots children and leaves women and girls at greater risk of sexual and gender-based violence or exploitation, especially in displacement camps. Additionally, it often limits people's access to healthcare, education and economic opportunities.¹²²

7.3 Stigmatization and retaliation

A less obvious consequence of US airstrikes harming civilians is that, after a strike, the person who was thought to be targeted or his/her relatives might be suspected by the community to be a member of Al Shabaab, even when the persons in question maintain they are not. The reasoning being that the US must have had a reason to target the person in question. While the majority population in Jubbaland is forced to live under Al Shabaab rule, most civilians do not trust or appreciate the group. As such, when people in a village suspect one of their neighbors of being an Al Shabaab member, this person tends to become a social outcast. The effects of this happening may range from being denied access to shared resources, being left out of community agreements or excluded from community information, to becoming a literal outcast.

One interviewee described the social isolation by saying that someone who is suspected to be a member of Al Shabaab might feel uncomfortable going to a neighbor to borrow a cup of sugar.¹²³ Someone from Kobane referenced how, after an incident in which an airstrike killed a villager, the community became hostile to the family he had left behind. That family soon left their home.¹²⁴ One respondent who was injured in an airstrike recalled that just before she passed out from the shock and pain, she had a thought that she could never return to her village because her community would think that she was targeted because she was a spy for Al Shabaab.¹²⁵

The opposite also happens: After an airstrike, Al Shabaab may accuse civilians of acting as spies for the US or the Somali government and detain and question people, blaming them for the occurrence of the strikes. 'The way Al Shabaab controls is complicated and delicate,' said a respondent from Berhani and a former Al Shabaab member: 'Sometimes they get paranoid. They get worried about the communities. They are very secretive, but they also control like a government with checkpoints and collecting taxes.' This paranoia appears to increase as airstrikes occur: 'The more airstrikes, the more paranoid, the more angry [*sic*] they become.'¹²⁶ A displaced person from Bar Sanguuni shared that 'when they [Al Shabaab] hear the strikes, they come and question people and collect their phones.'¹²⁷

Sahra*, who was displaced after she lost 21 goats in a strike, experienced this paranoia firsthand, recalling how she was detained and beaten up by Al Shabaab after the airstrike because they thought – wrongly – that she had given the US information about their location.¹²⁸

122 Bijl et al., *On Civilian Harm*.

123 Interview with a civilian, 22 March 2022.

124 Interview with a civilian, 24 March 2022.

125 Interview with a civilian, 22 March 2022.

126 Interview with a former Al Shabaab member, 26 March 2022.

127 Interview with a civilian, 24 March, 2022.

128 Interview with a civilian, 24 March 2022.

This phenomenon is not limited to Jubbaland: Civilians in Lower Shabelle stated that Al Shabaab became 'more like hyenas' after airstrikes occurred and that, as the attacks increased, the group regularly began to accuse people of being spies. This caused civilians in Lower Shabelle to leave their fertile farmlands because they reported that Al Shabaab's increased paranoia made it impossible to continue living there peacefully.¹²⁹ As such, the airstrikes can have a debilitating social impact.

129 See Sperber, "The 'Collateral Damage' of the U.S.'s Unofficial War in Somalia."

8. On the receiving end: clarification needed about airstrike targets in Jubbaland

A critical part of this research is the question of who the US is targeting and harming in its operations in Jubbaland. As we have seen in the previous two chapters, US operations have a considerable negative impact on civilians. But also where Al Shabaab is targeted and affected, there are questions to be asked: who make up Al Shabaab's lower-level membership? To what extent do the targets pose a threat to the US? Is this strategy ultimately leading to more safety and security for civilians? This information is needed to come to any kind of understanding, let alone assessment, of US military operations in Jubbaland. In this chapter, we explore the extent of Al Shabaab's embeddedness in Jubbaland and relate how interviewees describe the group's rank-and-file membership. The final section explores several questions regarding the overall effectiveness and desirability of US military operations in Jubbaland. While answering such questions ultimately requires greater reflection and more research, this report intends to make a modest contribution to this important and ongoing debate.

8.1 Civilian descriptions of Al Shabaab and potential targets of US airstrikes

Regarding the targets of US airstrikes, two main findings emerged from our research. First, it can be difficult – especially for outsiders – to determine who is and is not part of Al Shabaab in Jubbaland or, even if people are considered part of Al Shabaab, to distinguish combatants from civilians. Second, where Al Shabaab is targeted, there are doubts as to the extent to which these individuals present a threat to the United States. Even more so as we received several reports that many members of Al Shabaab were forcefully recruited or joined the group because of a perceived lack of other options, rather than out of ideology.

Chapter 4 outlines how Al Shabaab is thoroughly ingrained in Jubbaland. As discussed there, the group can be seen to exert control throughout most of the state's territory, either directly or

indirectly: Al Shabaab levies taxes and controls the flow of goods throughout Jubbaland; it fully governs some territory – representing the only ‘government’ civilians there know; and it exerts more indirect influence in other territory, for instance through relations with clan elders.

One example of its influence is Al Shabaab’s control over the education system, managing many schools in Jubbaland. It has set up the so-called ‘Islamic institutes’: schools that are based on clan boundaries, paid for by clansmen and supervised by Al Shabaab police. Clans are forced to hand over quotas of pupils to the schools, where the children are trained in Al Shabaab ideology. At age fifteen, many children are subsequently sent to military training camps, often being coerced and without the knowledge of their parents.¹³⁰ The link between the schools and the military training camps and what would constitute an Al Shabaab member raises concerns about at what point in this pipeline individuals would be considered targets for US strikes.¹³¹

Further, not all children end up as combatants: according to one woman, five of her children were forced to be in Al Shabaab, but only one as a fighter.¹³² It further means that some parents end up with Al Shabaab, simply because they follow their children. A woman whose son and daughter were sent to an Al Shabaab-controlled school followed them, thereby joining Al Shabaab, and recounted how she would hear planes flying over the school, wondering whether these were US military.¹³³ Beyond the schools, Al Shabaab relies heavily on (other forms of) forced recruitment. A former commander of the group explained that Al Shabaab has recruitment drives, calling clan elders and telling them that there is an upcoming fight and that the group requires each elder to bring men to fight and support the cause.¹³⁴

Al Shabaab will give the clan elders a month and say ‘if you fail to bring [for example] ten boys there will be consequences’, so if there are 50 clans and everyone has to bring ten people, that means there are 500 forced fighters.¹³⁵

Many members do not appear to have joined the group out of ideological persuasion or fanaticism, though the Islamic institutes have radicalized certain members. Rather, many of the lower-ranking members in particular have joined because they saw few other options to make a living or because they were forced to do so. Interviewees who were displaced from areas across Jubbaland spoke of the forced recruitment of young men, boys and girls.

Al Shabaab’s only tactic is abduction and forceful recruitment. First they talk to you. If you refuse, then they treat you as an enemy. They will torture you, beat you, put you on the tarmac road when it is hot and beat you, so once you have joined you have to obey.¹³⁶

130 Hiraal Institute, *The Fighters Factory: Inside Al-Shabab's Education System* [report], Hiraal Institute, 2018.

131 As an example: A strike was carried out in September 2018 on an Al Shabaab ‘training school’ in Middle Juba, with three children – in some accounts referred to as child soldiers – reportedly killed. It is unclear who is behind the attack; AFRICOM has denied responsibility. See Airwars, *Assessment USSOM145-C* [website], <https://airwars.org/civilian-casualties/ussom145-c-september-19-2018/>, (accessed 10 October 2022).

132 Interview with former Al Shabaab member, 23 March 2022.

133 Interview with former Al Shabaab member, 22 March 2022.

134 Human Rights Watch has reported similar practices in other areas of Somalia. See Human Rights Watch, ‘Somalia: Al-Shabab Demanding Children’, *Human Rights Watch* [blog], 14 January 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/15/somalia-al-shabab-demanding-children>, (accessed 4 October 2022).

135 Interview with former Al Shabaab commander, 21 March 2022.

136 Interview with former Al Shabaab member, 21 March 2022.

In some cases of people joining Al Shabaab willingly, one can further ask how ‘voluntary’ such decisions really are. One woman related that she joined Al Shabaab because she worried that if she would not do so herself, the group would beat or torture her parents or take them court and fine them. Al Shabaab had approached her parents before, asking for their daughter to ‘be a good Muslim’. She stated that she joined when she was young and was taken to a camp where she cooked and washed clothes for the fighters.¹³⁷ She stated: ‘Most of the boys are forcefully recruited. They are brought when they are fourteen or fifteen, but then by the time they leave they are eager and enthusiastic. Some have grown up in the camps.’¹³⁸

Other former members said they joined Al Shabaab in order to earn a living. One man, who identified as a pastoralist, was hired by Al Shabaab to guard and care for their livestock and collect taxes. He said he was always scared of strikes targeting him while he went about his work.¹³⁹ Another former member of the group who also collected taxes for Al Shabaab said that, ‘circumstances force people to join Al Shabaab. They are not dangerous, the only way is to join them.’¹⁴⁰ A woman whose father worked as a tax collector for Al Shabaab said that ‘in reality he was a farmer’.¹⁴¹ These accounts point to how diffuse Al Shabaab ‘membership’ can be, an impression that was given further credence by a researcher at Amnesty International:

In many parts of Somalia, including in Jubaland, it is difficult to know who is an Al Shabaab combatant and who is not. There are armed men in many parts of the country who are either livestock herders or farmers or clan militia members who are not members of the group. And in some cases, armed pastoralist community members who live in Al Shabaab controlled areas could be forced to work for them. It is a very complicated dynamic.¹⁴²

In previous reporting by Amnesty International, a former AFRICOM commander even went as far to suggest that ‘all military-aged males observed with known Al Shabaab members, inside specific areas – areas in which the US military has deemed the population to be supporting or sympathetic to Al Shabaab – are now considered legitimate military targets.’ AFRICOM has contradicted this.¹⁴³ It does, however, employ a definition of ‘combatant’ that does not necessarily limit the use of lethal force to Al Shabaab members actively engaged in combat and which significantly narrows its understanding of ‘civilian’ as compared to the definition put forward by the UN in its Protection of Civilians policy, which we recommend the US military to adopt (see chapter 2 for our recommendations). The US military, including AFRICOM, define combatant as:

Persons directly participating in an armed conflict, or persons whose hostile actions have purposefully and materially supported hostilities against the U.S. Individuals who are formally or functionally part of a non-State armed group that is engaged in hostilities may be made the object of attack because they likewise share in their group’s hostile intent.¹⁴⁴

137 It is not confirmed if this was a training camp or military base.

138 Interview with former Al Shabaab member, 23 March 2022.

139 Interview with former Al Shabaab tax collector, 26 March 2022.

140 Interview with former Al Shabaab tax collector, 26 March 2022.

141 Interview with a civilian, 26 March 2022.

142 Email from the Somalia researcher at Amnesty International, 26 October 2022.

143 Amnesty International, *The Hidden US War*, p. 7.

144 See the U.S. Africa Command Public Affairs’ ‘Civilian Casualty Assessment Quarterly Reports’.

Former members of Al Shabaab, current Somali officials, civilians and regional experts all said that members of the group are generally people who have been forcefully recruited or who have non-combat jobs such as watching Al Shabaab's livestock or collecting taxes and emphasized that many such lower-ranking members do not pose a direct threat against the US. In fact, of the twenty people who were interviewed who experienced an airstrike in Al Shabaab-controlled territory, just one mentioned an incident in which a dangerous and influential Al Shabaab member was said to be killed in an airstrike. This man was said to be involved in 'organizing violence' and the interviewee considered him a threat to the security of Jubbaland and the US.¹⁴⁵

It was further widely suggested in conversations with numerous interviewees that the majority of Al Shabaab members would leave the group if they could and that, if given the opportunity for a job and safe life, could be a peaceful part of Somali society. A former member, a pastoralist and tax collector for the group, said he snuck away and came to Kismayo to 'study [and] make a living', because it is more peaceful in Kismayo.¹⁴⁶ A former commander went as far as to say that 'most Al Shabaab commanders and soldiers want to run away but are scared.' Continuing that 'the fanatics are few' and that 'if you gave them an opportunity or a window of hope they would take it.'¹⁴⁷ The Director of Communications for the Office of the President said that some people in Al Shabaab call their parents and ask them for money so they can migrate to South Africa.¹⁴⁸

8.2 Airstrikes as a recruitment tool

Another important finding relates to a different type of impact the airstrikes potentially have: contributing to Al Shabaab recruitment. Interviewees reported that US military operations and the threat thereof are being used by Al Shabaab to convince Somalis that the US military is their enemy. This argument was told to be especially effective whenever strikes result in the deaths of civilians and the destruction of personal property: 'They [Al Shabaab] tell the people that they [the US] are enemies and they are coming to attack us. They use the strikes as recruitment.'¹⁴⁹

This finding in itself is not new but is consistent with reporting from the Lower Shabelle region, as well as with expert analysis on fundamentalist groups worldwide.¹⁵⁰ In Lower Shabelle, men reported that after they were injured, lost family or property in strikes, Al Shabaab actively tried to recruit them. When they refused to join, they were forced to flee to Mogadishu.¹⁵¹ Research carried out in 2014 among former Al Shabaab fighters also found that many of them cited anger over civilian casualties caused by SNA, AMISOM and/or US military operations as a reason to join the group.¹⁵²

145 Interview with Al Shabaab commander, 21 March 2022. The interviewee further stated that he thought it was good that the man was killed in a strike. He did not name the date or location of the strike.

146 Interview with former Al Shabaab tax collector, 26 March 2022.

147 Interview with former Al Shabaab commander, 21 March 2022.

148 Interview with Mohammed Hassan Hijs, Director of Communications for the Office of the President, 26 March 2022.

149 Interview, 24 March 2022.

150 M. Winsor, 'Trump's directive on offensive airstrikes in Somalia could fuel terrorism recruitment, experts warn', <https://abcnews.go.com/US/trumps-directive-offensive-airstrikes-somalia-fuel-terrorism-recruitment/story?id=46490369>, (accessed 17 September 2022); Azeem et al., *After the strike*.

151 A. Sperber, 'The "Collateral Damage" of the U.S.'s Unofficial War in Somalia', *In These Times*, <https://inthesetimes.com/features/us-air-strikes-somalia-al-shabab-isis-pentagon-civilian-casualties.html>, (accessed 17 September 2022).

152 J. Crouch, *Counter-terror and the logic of violence in Somalia's civil war* [report], SaferWorld, 2018.

This finding becomes all the more pertinent when viewed alongside the civilian harm impact of airstrikes as related in the previous chapters, as well as the finding that many of those who are on the strikes' receiving end may not actually pose a serious and direct threat against the US. It points to an adverse strategic effect of a military strategy, the effectiveness of which can already be called into question.

8.3 Questions raised

The accounts in the previous section raise the question whether a military response to the Somali conflict is the most effective approach to further people's security. A militarized approach does not address people's grievances with the state or their perceived lack of economic opportunities. As stated in a 2018 SaferWorld report:

Under the counter-terror lens, al-Shabaab is the problem to be addressed, and other conflict dynamics struggle for attention. Yet in the view of many analysts and research participants, including government officials, academics, elders and community members, al-Shabaab is a symptom of the conflict rather than its cause.¹⁵³

Years of airstrikes have resulted in the deaths of several key leaders of Al Shabaab, but they have not diminished the group's ability to carry out high-profile attacks, nor have they resulted in significant territorial gains or stability and security for civilians.¹⁵⁴ In fact, the current approach's heavy reliance on airpower may have the unwanted effect of serving as a recruitment tool for Al Shabaab. The targeting of key leaders may also lead to short-term successes, while being harmful in the long term. According to SaferWorld analysis, the deaths of two key leaders – Aden Hashi Ayro (2008) and Ahmed Abdi Godane (2014) – as a result of US airstrikes have both times led to more extremist leadership replacements.¹⁵⁵ Where it concerns the impression that the US military has also carried out attacks against lower-level members of Al Shabaab, there are risks too. Reflecting on this question and relating it to experiences in Afghanistan, a US military interviewee described the targeting of lower-level members of non-state armed groups as a:

[D]isservice from an American perspective because you do not control the narrative on the ground [...] A local perspective might be 'even if he was [Al Shabaab], he was not hurting anyone at that moment [...] I did not see the American he was hurting.'¹⁵⁶

The desirability of the US approach must also be viewed in relation to the human costs it incurs. We have seen how US airstrikes result in considerable civilian harm. This was echoed by interviewees who, although often suffering under Al Shabaab rule, remarked that the airstrikes were not the right solution and do not advance their (sense of) security. One respondent remarked of the airstrikes that 'it is too much to kill three or four Al Shabaab. It is too excessive.' Going on to state that 'the

153 Crouch, *Counter-terror and the logic of violence*.

154 Crouch, *Counter-terror and the logic of violence*; S. Suri, 'Barbed wire on our heads': *Lessons from counter-terror, stabilisation and statebuilding in Somalia* [report], SaferWorld, 2016.

155 S. Suri, *Barbed wire on our heads*.

156 Interview with Lt Col Jahara Matisek, US Air Force, Military Professor 'National Security Affairs', US Naval War College, 5 November 2022. The views expressed by Lt Col Matisek are his own and do not reflect the official position of the US Air Force, Naval War College, Department of Defense or the US Government.

movement of Al Shabaab is very small and the grenades [*sic*] are too big.¹⁵⁷

A second important question in assessing the desirability of the US's militarized approach to the Somali conflict lies in the extent to which Al Shabaab can be considered to pose an imminent threat outside of Somalia and the immediate region or, in other words, against the US. This has been an ongoing debate in the US for some time, with doubts regarding both Al Shabaab's intent and its capability to carry out a high-profile attack beyond the region and against the US.¹⁵⁸ The same US military interviewee – speaking on personal title – also questioned this Al Shabaab threat: 'Al Shabaab has never attacked America: it is the same thing with Boko Haram, neither of them have any interest in traveling to America and attacking.'¹⁵⁹

The findings in this chapter give a human face to the rules applied under former President Trump to govern the use of lethal force against terrorism suspects abroad, discussed earlier in this paper. The Biden administration released a redacted version of these rules last year.¹⁶⁰ Since, some news has emerged about the new administration's policy via the media, but much remains unknown about this Presidential Policy Memorandum (PPM) that guides the use of counterterrorism drone strikes outside conventional war zones.¹⁶¹ As such, it remains difficult to assess whether the US is moving forward with a strategy to resolve the conflict in Somalia that will be less harmful to its civilian population. More clarity is needed from the US government and military to take away such concerns.

157 Interview with a civilian, 22 March 2022.

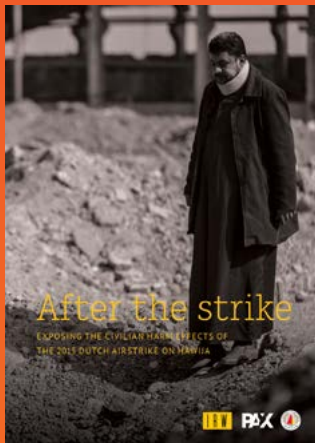
158 L. Hartig, 'Biden's New Counterterrorism Strategy in Somalia: Cautions and Unknowns', *Just Security* [blog], 17 May 2022, <https://www.justsecurity.org/81559/bidens-new-counterterrorism-policy-in-somalia-cautions-and-unknowns/>, (accessed 19 October 2022); S. Harrison, 'What the White House Use of Force Policy Means for the War in Somalia', *Just Security* [blog], 20 October 2022, <https://www.justsecurity.org/83642/white-house-use-of-force-policy-and-somalia/>, (accessed 21 October 2022).

159 Interview with Lt Col Jahara Matisek, 5 November 2022. The views expressed by Lt Col Matisek are his own and do not reflect the official position of the US Air Force, Naval War College, Department of Defense or the US Government.

160 C. Savage, 'Trump's Secret Rules for Drone Strikes Outside War Zones Are Disclosed', *The New York Times*, 1 May 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/01/us/politics/trump-drone-strike-rules.html>, (accessed 4 October 2022).

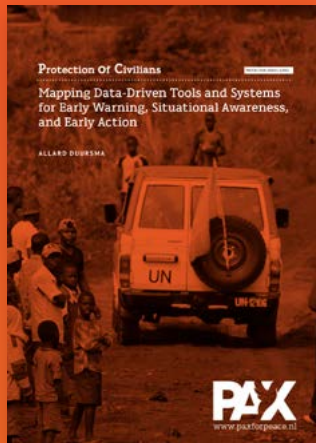
161 C. Savage, 'White House Tightens Rules on Counterterrorism Drone Strikes', *The New York Times*, 10 October 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/07/us/politics/drone-strikes-biden-trump.html>, (accessed 22 October 2022).

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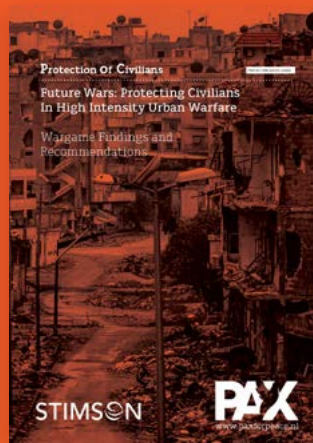
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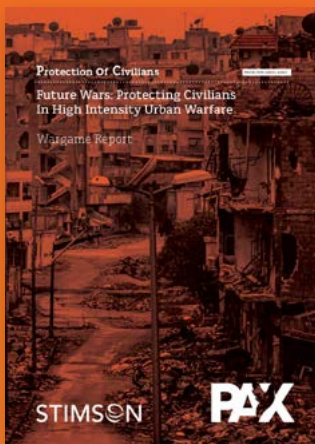
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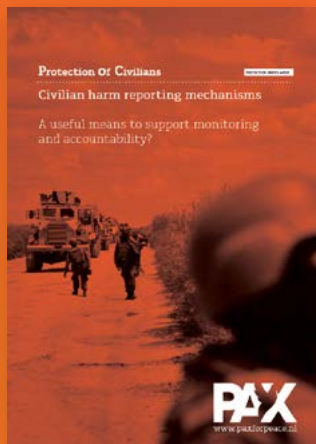
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