



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on January 21, 2019

Trump Orders Escalation Against al-Shabaab in Somalia

The United States has been involved in several endless “wars on terrorism” since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, most notably the war in Afghanistan, where U.S. troops have been engaged in fighting for more than 17 years. But the *Wall Street Journal* on January 17 wrote about “America’s Other Endless War” — the battle against al-Shabaab militants in Somalia. Al-Shabaab is a jihadist fundamentalist group based in East Africa that pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda back in 2012.



The *Journal* report noted that following al-Shabaab’s emergence from Somalia’s anarchy, former President George W. Bush began basing a small number of U.S. troops in Somalia in 2007. Barack Obama’s administration conducted air raids against al-Shabaab leaders.

The report noted that though President Trump recently ordered a withdrawal from Syria and a sharp reduction of U.S. troops in Afghanistan, he has declared parts of Somalia “areas of active hostility” and authorized an escalation of offensive operations against al-Shabaab. The U.S. military has doubled the size of the U.S. forces on the ground to 500.

U.S. airstrikes against al-Shabaab positions and fighters have tripled since 2016, to 47 last year, the report cited the U.S. Africa Command and the U.S. military, which says it killed 338 al-Shabaab fighters in 2018.

The *Journal* cited a Pentagon statement that the U.S. military remains committed to a presence in Somalia. In the first eight days of this year, the military reported conducting five airstrikes and killing 26 militants. So far, the Trump administration plans only minimal troop reductions in Somalia, according to U.S. military officials.

The *New York Times* reported on January 20 that the United States has dramatically stepped up airstrikes against al-Shabab militants in Somalia since President Trump took office, carrying out at least 47 such strikes last year. Some have targeted top al-Shabaab leaders or key financial officials; the extremist group funds its attacks with an extensive network of “taxation” and extortion.

The *Times* cited a statement from the United States Africa Command that it had carried out its deadliest airstrike in Somalia in months, killing 52 al-Shabaab extremists after a “large group” mounted an attack on Somali forces.

The *Times* quoted a statement from the military that it was committed to “preventing al-Shabab from taking advantage of safe havens from which they can build capacity and attack the people of Somalia.”

Photo: AP Images

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