



EAST AFRICA COUNTERTERRORISM OPERATION NORTH AND WEST AFRICA COUNTERTERRORISM OPERATION

LEAD INSPECTOR GENERAL REPORT TO THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS



APRIL 1, 2020–JUNE 30, 2020

ABOUT THIS REPORT

A 2013 amendment to the Inspector General Act established the Lead Inspector General (Lead IG) framework for oversight of overseas contingency operations. This legislation requires the Inspectors General of the Department of Defense (DoD), Department of State (DoS), and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to provide quarterly reports to Congress on active overseas contingency operations.

The Chair of the Council of Inspectors General for Integrity and Efficiency designated the DoD Inspector General (IG) as the Lead IG for the East Africa Counterterrorism Operation and the North and West Africa Counterterrorism Operation. The DoS IG is the Associate IG. The USAID IG participates in oversight of the operations.

The Offices of Inspector General of the DoD, DoS, and USAID are referred to in this report as the Lead IG agencies. Other partner agencies also contribute to oversight of the East Africa Counterterrorism Operation and the North and West Africa Counterterrorism Operation.

The Lead IG agencies collectively carry out their statutory missions to:

- Develop a joint strategic plan to conduct comprehensive oversight of the operation.
- Ensure independent and effective oversight of programs and operations of the Federal Government in support of the operation through either joint or individual audits, inspections, and evaluations.
- Report quarterly to Congress and the public on the operation and activities of the Lead IG agencies.

METHODOLOGY

To produce this quarterly report, the Lead IG agencies submit requests for information to the DoD, DoS, and USAID about the East Africa Counterterrorism Operation and the North and West Africa Counterterrorism Operation and related programs. The Lead IG agencies also gather data and information from open sources, including congressional testimony, policy research organizations, press conferences, think tanks, and media reports.

The sources of information contained in this report are listed in endnotes or notes to tables and figures. Except in the case of audits, inspections, or evaluations referenced in this report, the Lead IG agencies have not verified or audited the data and information provided by the agencies. For further details on the methodology for this report, see Appendix B.

CLASSIFIED APPENDIX

This report normally includes an appendix containing classified information about the U.S. mission to degrade or contain al-Qaeda and ISIS affiliates in specific regions of Africa. Due to the coronavirus disease–2019 pandemic, the Lead IG agencies did not prepare a classified appendix this quarter.

FOREWORD

We are pleased to submit this Lead Inspector General (Lead IG) quarterly report to the U.S. Congress on the East Africa Counterterrorism Operation and the North and West Africa Counterterrorism Operation. This report discharges our individual and collective agency oversight responsibilities pursuant to the Inspector General Act of 1978.

The purpose of the East Africa Counterterrorism Operation and the North and West Africa Counterterrorism Operation is to degrade al-Qaeda and ISIS affiliates, and other violent extremist organizations, in specified regions of East and North Africa and contain those groups in specified regions of West Africa.

The Secretary of Defense designated the two operations as overseas contingency operations in February 2018. At the time of designation, both operations were pre-existing counterterrorism operations. The Secretary of Defense removed the overseas contingency operation designation for both operations in May 2019, but the two operations continue to receive overseas contingency operation funding.

This quarterly report describes the activities of the U.S. Government in support of the East Africa Counterterrorism Operation and the North and West Africa Counterterrorism Operation, as well as the work of the Department of Defense, the Department of State, and the U.S. Agency for International Development to promote the U.S. Government's policy goals in Africa during the period April 1 through June 30, 2020.

This report also discusses the planned, ongoing, and completed oversight work conducted by the Lead IG agencies and our partner oversight agencies during the quarter. This quarter, the Lead IG agencies issued 16 oversight reports related to the East Africa and North and West Africa Counterterrorism Operations.

This report usually includes an appendix containing classified information about these operations. This quarter, due to the coronavirus disease-2019 pandemic and related staffing challenges, the Lead IG did not produce the classified appendix.

Working in close collaboration, we remain committed to providing comprehensive oversight and timely reporting on these operations.



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Sean W. O'Donnell
Acting Inspector General
U.S. Department of Defense



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Diana R. Shaw".

Diana R. Shaw
Acting Inspector General
U.S. Department of State



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ann Calvaresi Barr".

Ann Calvaresi Barr
Inspector General
U.S. Agency for International
Development



On the Cover

U.S. Ambassador to Libya Richard Norland and Libyan Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj meet in Zuwara, Libya (USAFRICOM photo); a U.S. Army soldier places a medical sticker on boxes of healthcare equipment, bandages, narcotics, and PPE that will be distributed to medical providers in East Africa (U.S. Air Force photo); a U.S. Army soldier provides security for a C-130J Super Hercules in Somalia (U.S. Air Force photo).

MESSAGE FROM THE LEAD INSPECTOR GENERAL



Sean W. O'Donnell

I am pleased to present this Lead Inspector General (Lead IG) report on the status of the East Africa Counterterrorism Operation and the North and West Africa Counterterrorism Operation. The purpose of these operations is to degrade al-Qaeda and ISIS affiliates, and other violent extremist organizations (VEO), in designated regions of East and North Africa, and contain them in designated regions of West Africa.

The United States and its international partners made limited progress this quarter toward the goals of these two operations. In East Africa, al-Shabaab moved freely and launched attacks in Somalia and Kenya. United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM) reported no change in the amount of territory controlled by al-Shabaab or the Somali government.

In North Africa, ISIS-Libya resumed small-scale attacks in the southern desert region of Libya. The ongoing civil war, which is concentrated in the northern parts of the country, intensified as more foreign fighters and mercenaries deployed to Libya to fight on both sides of the conflict. USAFRICOM withdrew its small number of counterterrorism forces from

Libya in 2019 due to instability caused by the civil war.

In West Africa, where al-Qaeda and ISIS affiliates operate in the Sahel and Lake Chad regions, violence continued at high levels and expanded to new territories. In June, a French-led, U.S.-supported operation in Mali killed the highest-ranking al-Qaeda leader in North and West Africa, Abdelmalek Droukdal. In August, the United States suspended military cooperation with Mali following a mutiny in the country's armed forces and the subsequent resignation of its president; we are monitoring the situation and will report on these developments in our next quarterly report.

The spread of coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) across the African continent did not appear to slow VEO activity during the quarter. At the same time, the pandemic exacerbated many of the underlying conditions that foster VEO growth, including economic and food insecurity. The United Nations head of Peace Operations reported that in the Sahel, COVID-19 added "a layer of complexity" to the security environment as VEOs capitalized on the virus to undermine state government authority and continue their attacks.

The U.S. Government adjusted some of its activities in Africa in response to the pandemic. USAFRICOM reduced advising of partner forces, conducting only remote advising in some locations. Meanwhile, U.S. airstrikes in Somalia continued, as did several partner-led counterterrorism operations. The Department of State continued diplomatic activities in Africa, despite having reduced staffing at some of its embassies due to COVID-19.

I look forward to working with my Lead IG colleagues to continue to report on and provide oversight of these operations and related U.S. Government activity in Africa, as required by the IG Act.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sean W O'Donnell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sean W. O'Donnell
Acting Inspector General
U.S. Department of Defense





U.S. Army soldiers board a C-130J Super Hercules at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti. (U.S. Marine Corps photo)

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2

THE QUARTER IN REVIEW

Overview.....	10
East Africa.....	13
North Africa	32
West Africa.....	42

OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

Strategic Planning.....	58
Audit, Inspection, and Evaluation Activity	60
Investigations and Hotline Activity	74

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A	
Classified Appendix to this Report	78
APPENDIX B	
Methodology for Preparing this Lead IG Quarterly Report	78
Acronyms.....	80
Map of North and West Africa	81
Map of East Africa	82
Endnotes.....	83



U.S. Air Force airmen load a C-130J Super Hercules with medical supplies used to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. (U.S. Air Force photo)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

The coronavirus disease–2019 (COVID-19) pandemic spread across the African continent during the quarter.¹ The United Nations reported that in the Sahel, COVID-19 added “a layer of complexity” to the security environment.² In that region, violent extremist organizations (VEO) capitalized on the virus to undermine state government authority through “unrelenting” attacks on national and international forces.³ United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM) reported that it did not observe any changes in extremist violence or VEO tactics as a result of the pandemic.⁴



USAFRICOM adjusted its advising of partner forces in Africa to prevent the spread of the virus. In East Africa, USAFRICOM provided only remote advise-and-assist support to partner forces for most of the quarter.⁵ In North and West Africa, COVID-19 also led to reduced advisory activities, including advising by the U.S. Army's 1st Security Force Assistance Brigade (SFAB), elements of which began their deployment to West Africa earlier in the year.⁶

USAID reported that several administrative hurdles, including additional layers of approval at the White House, restrictions on the procurement of personal protective equipment (PPE) for overseas projects, and inconsistent guidance on the branding and marking of assistance, slowed USAID's COVID-19 programming in Africa.⁷

A U.S. Army soldier places a medical sticker on boxes of healthcare equipment, bandages, and PPE that will be distributed to medical providers in East Africa. (U.S. Air Force photo)



EAST AFRICA

During the quarter, al-Shabaab used varied and complex tactics in its attacks, including insurgent-style tactics, ambushes, harassing and hit-and-run attacks, and improvised explosive devices (IED). USAFRICOM reported that al-Shabaab remained active in Mogadishu, carrying out multiple targeted killings in the capital and several mortar attacks at the Mogadishu International Airport complex. Al-Shabaab also targeted Somali and international security forces in the country's southern provinces, where al-Shabaab holds territory and seeks to expand.⁸

Al-Shabaab's attacks continued across Somalia despite the COVID-19 pandemic.⁹ The group initially sought to blame the Somali government and international actors for the pandemic and to present itself as a more legitimate, credible governing actor than the Somali government.¹⁰ However, these efforts were largely unsuccessful and the group later shifted away from this aggressive messaging.¹¹ In June, al-Shabaab opened a COVID-19 clinic in Jilib.¹²

While USAFRICOM reduced its in-person advising in East Africa, U.S. airstrikes in Somalia continued. USAFRICOM reported that it conducted 7 airstrikes against VEO targets in Somalia during the quarter, a decrease from 33 in the previous quarter.¹³ An April 2 airstrike killed Yusuf Jilis, whom USAFRICOM described as "a long-standing, high-ranking leader" of al-Shabaab.¹⁴

The Somali National Army (SNA) and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) continued operations to reduce attacks in Mogadishu, held recently liberated territory in the Lower Shabelle region, and conducted successful convoy operations along dangerous supply routes, according to USAFRICOM.¹⁵ However, the SNA did not liberate any new territory from al-Shabaab.¹⁶ In addition, the SNA continued to face organizational challenges.¹⁷

In June, Somalia’s National Independent Electoral Commission announced to international media that it planned to delay the country’s parliamentary and presidential elections—originally scheduled for November 2020—due to “significant technical and security challenges.”¹⁸

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, implementers for USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance adapted existing programming and implemented new programming in East Africa, including awareness campaigns, training for health facility staff, installation of isolation points, and logistics and air transport support.¹⁹

NORTH AFRICA

U.S. counterterrorism operations in North Africa remained limited during the quarter. USAFRICOM has not had a physical presence in Libya since April 2019 due to the unpredictable security environment caused by the civil war between the UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) and the Libyan National Army (LNA).²⁰

In May and June, ISIS-Libya conducted its first attacks in Libya in more than a year, according to the Department of State and media reporting. ISIS-Libya claimed several small-scale attacks that targeted LNA personnel and its civilian supporters in southern Libya.²¹

During the quarter, the U.S. Government expressed concern about Russia’s continued involvement in the civil war, supporting the LNA.²² USAFRICOM estimated that during the quarter, Russia supported thousands of mercenaries in Libya, including approximately 3,000 from the Wagner Group, a Russian private military company, and approximately 2,000 Syrians.²³ During the quarter, USAFRICOM published what it called photographic evidence of Russian attack aircraft, landmines and IEDs, and advanced military equipment capable of offensive lethal operations, all operated by Wagner Group forces in Libya.²⁴



U.S. Ambassador to Libya Richard Norland and Libyan Prime Minister Fayeze al-Sarraj meet in Zuwara, Libya. (USAFRICOM photo)



Nigeriens wait in line to receive food donations in Agadez, Niger. (DoD photo)

In addition to Russian-supported mercenaries supporting the LNA, Turkey sent more than 5,000 Syrian mercenaries to support the GNA, according to USAFRICOM.²⁵

USAFRICOM said that some extremists with previous ties to VEOs have been fighting in the Libyan civil war, but it is possible they were fighting for financial and personal reasons rather than for ideological motivations.²⁶ Additionally, USAFRICOM reported that there were increasing reports of theft, sexual assault, and misconduct by Syrian fighters, which is likely to compound an already dangerous security environment in Libya and result in backlash from the Libyan public.²⁷

During the quarter, the United States continued diplomatic efforts to promote a return to a UN-facilitated ceasefire and participated in talks about the security, political, and economic situation in Libya. The DoS reported that U.S. mediation between the Libyan parties to the ongoing civil war and their external backers focused on resolving the ongoing LNA shutdown of Libya's oil sector, promoting increased fiscal transparency, demobilizing militias, and preventing further military escalation.²⁸

WEST AFRICA

Extremist violence in West Africa remained elevated during the quarter, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Database tracking of extremist violence.²⁹ USAFRICOM reported that VEOs are expanding the region, conducting operations in the Western Sahel and some northern parts of West African coastal states.³⁰

In June, French counterterrorism forces, supported by U.S. intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets, killed al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) leader Abdelmalek Droukdal and several close associates in northern Mali.³¹ USAFRICOM said that Droukdal's death was significant because AQIM had recently prioritized expanding al-Qaeda's jihadist coalition in West Africa to include Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM).³²

In late April, according to USAFRICOM, intense fighting between JNIM and ISIS in the Greater Sahara near the Mali-Burkina Faso border resulted in "dozens" of deaths on each side. The two groups' previously cooperative relationship subsided as they targeted each other due to JNIM defections and ISIS in the Greater Sahara's territorial expansion in Mali.³³

Human rights organizations documented instances of alleged human rights violations by security forces in West Africa, including members of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force.³⁴ The United States continued to provide security assistance to G-5 Sahel countries during the quarter, but increasing allegations of human rights abuses led to strong statements from embassies in the region, DoS leaders in Washington, and members of Congress.³⁵

USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance reported that as of June 30, nearly \$67 million was planned for the COVID-19 response in Lake Chad Basin and Central Sahel countries.³⁶ USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives used its ongoing Nigeria Lake Chad Basin program to rapidly provide COVID-19-related activities in the Nigerian states of Yobe, Adamawa, and Borno.³⁷

Lead IG Oversight Activities

This quarter, the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies completed 16 reports related to the East Africa and North and West Africa counterterrorism operations. These reports examined various activities that support these operations, including: DoD oversight of training to mobile medical teams prior to deploying to the U.S. Africa Command area of operations; the DoS Bureau of Counterterrorism's and Bureau of African Affairs' oversight and management of their foreign assistance programs; the DoS Global Engagement Center's management and monitoring of its Federal assistance awards; and financial accountability in humanitarian assistance programs. The Air Force Audit Agency also reported on whether the Air Force provided equipment and training to security force personnel needed to perform mission requirements while deployed in Niger. As of June 30, 22 projects were ongoing, and 5 projects were planned.

Lead IG investigative agencies coordinated on 17 open investigations related to the East Africa counterterrorism operation and 3 open investigations related to the North and West Africa counterterrorism operation. The open investigations involve procurement and grant fraud, corruption, computer intrusion, theft, and human trafficking.





Pallets of food are loaded onto a C-17 in England for distribution in Ghana as part of the COVID-19 response. (NATO photo)

THE QUARTER IN REVIEW

OVERVIEW.....10

EAST AFRICA

 Status of the Conflict 14

 Partner Force Development 20

 Diplomacy and Political
 Developments 26

 Humanitarian Assistance
 and Stabilization 26

NORTH AFRICA

 Status of the Conflict 32

 Partner Force Development 40

 Diplomacy and Political
 Developments 40

WEST AFRICA

 Status of the Conflict 44

 Diplomacy and Political
 Developments 49

 Humanitarian Assistance
 and Stabilization 50



THE QUARTER IN REVIEW

OVERVIEW

VEO Activity Steady Despite COVID-19 Pandemic

The global coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) pandemic contributed to the already volatile security situations in parts of Africa.¹ According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there were 303,986 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Africa as of the end of the quarter, a figure that likely undercounts the actual spread of the virus across the continent.²

United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM) said that the pandemic did not appear to have any impact on violent extremist organization (VEO) tactics or levels of violence during the quarter.³ The UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations said that the virus's spread in the Sahel added "a layer of complexity" to the security environment as VEOs capitalized on the virus to undermine state government authority through "unrelenting" attacks on national and international forces.⁴

General Stephen J. Townsend, Commander of USAFRICOM, meets with Djibouti Minister of Foreign Affairs Mahmoud Ali Youssouf at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti. (USAFRICOM photo)

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to alter U.S. military operations in Africa this quarter. In May, the DoD transitioned from a global “stop movement” order, issued in March, to a “conditions-based” approach that governed travel of its components during the pandemic.⁵

In East Africa, USAFRICOM provided only remote advise-and-assist support to partner forces during the quarter.⁶ In North Africa, COVID-19 also led to reduced advisory activities.⁷ In addition, USAFRICOM reported that personnel from the U.S. Army’s 1st Security Force Assistance Brigade (SFAB), who began their deployment to West Africa during the previous quarter, altered their activities due to COVID-19.⁸

VEOs in Africa are a persistent and growing threat to U.S. and allied interests on the continent. In January, General Stephen Townsend, Commander of USAFRICOM, stated in congressional testimony that VEOs “are expanding in Africa at a rapid pace, due in large part to weak governance and disenfranchised populations, while employing violence to exacerbate despair and hopelessness.”⁹ Most VEOs in Africa, General Townsend continued, “seek to strike at the [United States] in the region, and some aspire to strike the U.S. Homeland.”¹⁰

Table 1.

Counterterrorism and the USAFRICOM Mission

USAFRICOM structures its mission in Africa according to six lines of effort (LOE), three of which relate directly to the East Africa and North and West Africa Counterterrorism Operations.

Line of Effort		USAFRICOM Activities
LOE 1	Strengthen Partner Networks	Establish new partnerships with countries and organizations, strengthen existing relationships through enhanced communication and synchronization, and counter the activities of external actors such as China and Russia. This approach focuses on maintaining the United States as the preferred security partner in Africa.
LOE 2	Enhance Partner Capability	Build African partner capability focused on defense institution building, countering illicit trafficking, maritime security, counter-improvised explosive devices (IED) efforts, humanitarian assistance, infectious disease control, and counter-VEO efforts.
LOE 3	Develop Security in Somalia	The approach centers on partnered operations to degrade VEOs and security cooperation to develop the Somali Security Forces to a point where they are capable of their own counter-VEO operations and of Securing the Somali Government and its people.
LOE 4	Contain Instability in Libya	Use military tools to advance diplomacy, conduct operations to degrade VEOs, improve the security architecture of the Libyan Government of National Accord, and, once a political reconciliation is achieved, strengthen the national security forces of a recognized Libyan government.
LOE 5	Support Partners in the Sahel and Lake Chad region	Conduct engagements, exercises, and limited operations, and provide appropriate security assistance to increase partners’ willingness and capabilities in counter-VEO efforts.
LOE 6	Set the Theater	Ensure that USAFRICOM has the authorities, capabilities, footprint, agreements, and understandings in place to maintain access and accomplish USAFRICOM’s missions.

Source: USAFRICOM, Posture Statement, 2/17/2019; USAFRICOM, vetting comments, 5/1/2020 and 5/4/2020.

DoD Africa Posture Review Still Pending

USAFRICOM briefed the Secretary of Defense in April regarding its “Blank Slate Review,” the DoD-wide review of all combatant commands, begun in fall 2019, to align DoD resources with the objectives of the 2018 National Defense Strategy. As of the end of the quarter, the Secretary of Defense was still deliberating decisions about the future of U.S. forces in Africa, according to USAFRICOM and the DoD.¹¹ General Townsend stated earlier this year that approximately 5,000 U.S. forces and 1,000 DoD civilians and contractors were stationed in Africa.¹²

USAFRICOM was the first combatant command to submit recommendations as part of the Blank Slate Review.¹³ During congressional testimony in March, General Townsend said USAFRICOM’s Blank Slate Review prioritizes “objectives and actions to protect the homeland and secure U.S. strategic interests in Africa while focusing on the taxpayers’ investments in the right area.”¹⁴

The first decision based on the Blank Slate Review was to deploy elements of the 1st SFAB to Africa.¹⁵ SFAB personnel specialize in train, advise, and assist missions.¹⁶ USAFRICOM said that the SFAB’s objective in Africa is to develop African defense institutions so that they “can support themselves with limited outside assistance” and “become security exporters for the region.”¹⁷ When its advising activities resume, the SFAB will be used to conduct security cooperation training focused on defense institutions “at all levels.”¹⁸ USAFRICOM plans to deploy the SFAB elements to the USAFRICOM area of responsibility as conditions permit.¹⁹

USAFRICOM said that it is developing metrics to track the success of the SFAB deployment. The metrics will include the quantity and quality of African troops trained and assessments of how African defense institutions improve. USAFRICOM said that it will review the metrics on a quarterly and annual basis to assess training over time.²⁰

General Townsend stated earlier this year that approximately 5,000 U.S. forces and 1,000 DoD civilians and contractors were stationed in Africa.



A U.S. Army soldier provides security for a C-130J Super Hercules during unloading operations in Somalia. (U.S. Air Force photo)

EAST AFRICA

The East Africa Counterterrorism Operation seeks to degrade and deny victory to al-Shabaab and ISIS-Somalia in Somalia and neighboring countries in the region. U.S. military activities conducted in support of the East Africa Counterterrorism Operation focus on Somalia.¹ Al-Shabaab, an al-Qaeda-aligned terrorist group that has been active in Somalia and neighboring countries since 2006, maintains influence in many areas of Somalia.² ISIS-Somalia, a local affiliate of the international terrorist group, is active mainly in Somalia's northeastern Puntland region.³

U.S. counterterrorism operations in Somalia fall under Line of Effort 3 (Develop Security in Somalia) of USAFRICOM's Campaign Plan. USAFRICOM conducts airstrikes and missions to advise, assist, and accompany the Somali National Army (SNA). The DoD and the DoS provide support to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the SNA, including the SNA's advanced infantry unit, the Danab Brigade.

DoS and USAID activities in Somalia seek to promote good governance, prevent the growth of violent extremism, and alleviate the humanitarian crisis caused by years of conflict, drought, flooding, and poor governance. The United States has provided more than

\$3 billion in humanitarian assistance to Somalia since 2006, and more than \$250 million to support the development of Somalia's political, economic, and social sectors. The U.S. diplomatic and development communities reestablished their presence in the country when the U.S. Embassy in Mogadishu reopened at the Mogadishu International Airport in 2019.⁴

STATUS OF THE CONFLICT

Al-Shabaab Attacks Steady Despite the Pandemic

USAFRICOM reported that during the quarter, al-Shabaab continued to target Somali and international security forces, especially in the country's southern provinces, where al-Shabaab holds territory and seeks to expand. Al-Shabaab continued to shift fighters to target ongoing SNA efforts to clear al-Shabaab from a series of towns south of Mogadishu to Marka, along Somalia's east coast.⁵

Across Somalia, al-Shabaab attacks continued at historically high levels and remained steady during the quarter despite the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶ The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) project, an independent research organization funded in part by the U.S. Government, reported that there were 608 violent incidents in Somalia during the quarter, including battles, explosions, and violence against civilians. By comparison, ACLED recorded 568 incidents during the previous quarter. Most of the violent events this quarter involved al-Shabaab and were concentrated in the Banadir and Lower Shabelle regions.⁷

USAFRICOM reported that al-Shabaab used varied and complex tactics in its attacks, including insurgent-style tactics, such as ambushes, harassing and hit-and-run attacks, and IEDs.⁸ Al-Shabaab remained active in Mogadishu and carried out multiple targeted killings in the city. In May, al-Shabaab unsuccessfully attempted to assassinate the Somali National Intelligence and Security Agency director.⁹ The Mogadishu International Airport, the site of the U.S. Embassy and a common target of al-Shabaab attacks, suffered five mortar attacks, compared to one in the previous quarter.¹⁰ During the quarter, al-Shabaab also assassinated military and mid-level government officials in the Galmudug and Puntland regions.¹¹

Al-Shabaab continued to use IEDs in many of its attacks. In April, al-Shabaab used vehicle-borne IEDs (VBIED) in attempts to breach AMISOM bases in Barawe.¹² On June 23, an al-Shabaab suicide bomber targeted the Turkish military training facility in Mogadishu, killing a Somali military recruit and a bystander.¹³ Also in June, al-Shabaab conducted a VBIED attack against a Somali military checkpoint in Somalia's Mudug region, killing three Somali soldiers.¹⁴ Local media reported dozens of additional attempted and successful IED attacks by al-Shabaab during the quarter.¹⁵

Over the past year, al-Shabaab IED attacks have decreased slightly, according to United States Special Operations Command–Africa (SOCAFRICA).¹⁶ In particular, USAFRICOM reported that there were no al-Shabaab VBIED attacks in Mogadishu during the quarter, compared to one in the previous quarter. USAFRICOM said that the reduction in VBIED attacks is likely due to AMISOM and Somali force presence along main supply routes in Mogadishu.¹⁷

The United States has provided more than \$3 billion in humanitarian assistance to Somalia since 2006.

While the number of al-Shabaab's IED attacks decreased slightly, there has been no significant change in how the group constructs and deploys these weapons.¹⁸ According to USAFRICOM, al-Shabaab makes IEDs from commercial and homemade materials.¹⁹ Al-Shabaab's use of homemade explosives has increased since 2018, as ongoing efforts to clear mines and unexploded ordnance in Somalia have probably reduced al-Shabaab's access to military grade explosives.²⁰ In November 2019, the United Nations expanded its arms embargo on Somalia to include components that can be used in explosives. This quarter, the head of the United Nations Somalia Sanctions Committee warned that al-Shabaab may turn to illicit smuggling to acquire chemicals for explosives.²¹

Despite al-Shabaab's attacks and Somali and international efforts to counter them, the conflict remained at a stalemate. USAFRICOM reported no change in territory controlled by al-Shabaab or the Somali government.²² The DoS reported that al-Shabaab is currently unable to mass large forces but maintains economic influence at the village level. The DoS assessed that the group will continue to attempt to destabilize the region through targeted assassinations and IED attacks.²³

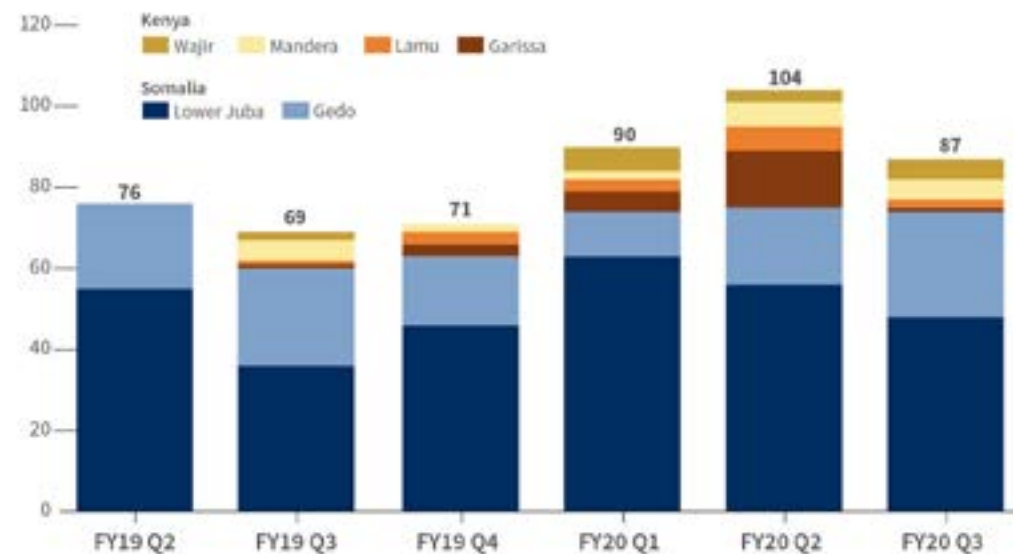
Al-Shabaab had between 5,000 and 10,000 fighters during the quarter, according to estimates from USAFRICOM and the DIA.²⁴

Violence in Somalia-Kenya Border Region Declines Slightly

Al-Shabaab conducted weekly cross-border raids and attacks on security camps in the Somalia-Kenya border region.²⁵ USAFRICOM assessed that al-Shabaab remained intent on and capable of conducting attacks inside Kenya and along the Somalia-Kenya border, consistent with its stated intent to compel Kenyan forces to withdraw from Somalia.²⁶

Figure 1.

Violent Events in the Somalia-Kenya Border Region, January 2019–June 2020



Source: ACLED (data for battles, explosions, and violence against civilians)

Violence in the Somalia-Kenya border region has increased over the past year, though the overall level of violence in the border region decreased slightly during the quarter.²⁷ (See Figure 1.) Most of the decrease in border region attacks during the quarter was due to a reduction in attacks on the Kenyan side of the border. There were 13 violent events in the 4 Kenyan counties that border Somalia (Waju, Lamu, Mandera, and Garissa), according to ACLED data. Most of these attacks involved al-Shabaab.²⁸

U.S. Airstrikes Decrease

USAFRICOM reported that it conducted seven airstrikes against VEO targets in Somalia during the quarter.²⁹ (See Table 2.) This represents a decrease from 33 strikes in the previous quarter and 9 strikes during the first quarter of FY 2020.³⁰ USAFRICOM explained that this decrease in strikes was due to adverse weather patterns throughout the region and resource allocation.³¹

USAFRICOM reported that the April 2 airstrike killed Yusuf Jilis, whom the command described as “a long-standing, high-ranking leader” of al-Shabaab.³²

U.S. airstrikes in Somalia continued during the quarter despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Speaking to a reporter after the April 2 airstrike, General Townsend said, “While we might like to pause our operations in Somalia because of the coronavirus, the leaders of al-Qaeda, al-Shabaab, and ISIS have announced that they see the crisis as an opportunity to further their terrorist agenda.”³³

Table 2.

USAFRICOM Airstrikes in Somalia, April–June 2020

Date of Strike	Location of Strike	Results
April 2	Bush Madina, Somalia	3 enemies killed 1 compound destroyed
April 3	Bush Madina, Somalia	5 enemies killed 1 vehicle destroyed
April 5	Mubaraak, Somalia	9 enemies killed 1 IED destroyed 1 vehicle disabled
April 6	Jilib, Somalia	5 enemies killed
April 9	Kobon, Somalia	10 enemies killed
April 10	Jamaame, Somalia	1 enemy killed
May 17	Qunyo Barrow, Somalia	2 enemies killed 1 compound destroyed

Source: USAFRICOM

USAFRICOM reported that during the quarter, it received 12 new allegations of civilian casualties related to 4 incidents, including its airstrikes on April 6 and April 10. USAFRICOM said that the allegations of casualties related to these two airstrikes in April were unsubstantiated and that it “assessed with a high degree of confidence” that no civilian casualties resulted from the strikes. A third allegation, related to an alleged incident on May 11, was also unsubstantiated because there was no U.S. military strike on the alleged date or at the alleged location. The fourth allegation, related to the May 17 strike, remained under review as of the end of the quarter.³⁴

USAFRICOM reported this quarter that one civilian was killed and three were injured during a U.S. airstrike on February 2. These civilians, USAFRICOM said, “were not visible when we delivered the strike against the targeted individual.”³⁵ USAFRICOM receives many allegations of civilian casualties—from NGOs, media, and other sources—that it ultimately determines to be unsubstantiated. These allegations, USAFRICOM said, are often based on different sources of information and definitions of who is a “civilian” or “combatant;” USAFRICOM uses the DoD Law of War manual to categorize these individuals. USAFRICOM said that it assesses allegations using “all available information,” including “layered intelligence sources that are not available to the public.”³⁶

Al-Shabaab and COVID-19

COVID-19 cases continued to increase in Somalia during the quarter. By the end of June, there were more than 2,900 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Somalia and 90 deaths.³⁷ The United Nations noted that the actual number of COVID-19 cases in Somalia is likely greater than this official figure because there is not enough testing and many areas are inaccessible.³⁸

VIOLENCE

The COVID-19 pandemic did not appear to have a significant impact on the conflict in Somalia. USAFRICOM reported that there was no significant change in al-Shabaab’s violence or tactics that it can directly attribute to the pandemic.³⁹ Similarly, USAFRICOM reported that there were no significant instances of al-Shabaab impeding aid efforts connected with the pandemic outside the group’s typical destabilizing terrorist activities.⁴⁰

U.S. and international forces reduced some of their operations in the country, though many continued, including U.S. airstrikes.⁴¹ SOCAFRICA described COVID-19 as an “environmental factor,” adding that “planned and future operations, activities, and initiatives will continue with necessary adjustments and considerations” for COVID-19.⁴²

(continued on next page)

Al-Shabaab and COVID-19 *(continued from previous page)*

MESSAGING

As the pandemic first reached Somalia, al-Shabaab took advantage of COVID-19 in its local propaganda.⁴³ According to a media analysis funded by the DoS Bureau of Counterterrorism, al-Shabaab sought to blame the Somali government and international partners for alleged responsibility or complicity in the pandemic, while denying rumors of the pandemic's impact on senior militant leaders. Al-Shabaab attempted to present itself as a more legitimate, credible governing actor than the Somali government, uniquely capable of protecting Somalis from the disease.⁴⁴ USAFRICOM reported that al-Shabaab issued media statements blaming the West and the weak Somali government for the disease spread.⁴⁵

Through its COVID-19 messaging, al-Shabaab may have been trying to capitalize on rising anti-government sentiment, USAFRICOM said.⁴⁶ However, al-Shabaab's target audience generally disregards statements and claims made by al-Shabaab, according to USAFRICOM.⁴⁷ The DoS said that al-Shabaab's inability to effectively capitalize on COVID-19 presents an opportunity for the Somali government and the SNA, which have increased their strategic communications capabilities in recent months with U.S. and international support.⁴⁸

USAFRICOM reported that as part of its pandemic response in Somalia, it disseminated information about COVID-19 spread, symptoms, testing, and treatment on various social media platforms. The command also highlighted how Somali government actions were in line with and often ahead of World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations.⁴⁹ USAFRICOM said that civil affairs units enabled partner forces through humanitarian assistance and NGO resources to promote COVID-19 prevention through the provision of personal protective equipment, hand soap, and information in local languages.⁵⁰

HEALTHCARE

By the end of the quarter, al-Shabaab appeared to acknowledge the severity of the pandemic. On May 14, al-Shabaab released a statement announcing that it had established a committee to provide "guidance" on the virus, directing Muslims in Somalia to cooperate with the committee. The group shifted away from aggressive messaging on COVID-19 in late May due to the spread of the virus to al-Shabaab members.⁵¹

In June, al-Shabaab opened a COVID-19 isolation and care facility in Jilib, a city it controls in southern Somalia.⁵² USAFRICOM also reported that the clinic claims to have a 24-hour hotline and is equipped with emergency vehicles and isolation facilities.⁵³ Al-Shabaab sermons urged vendors not to raise prices of goods.⁵⁴

Al-Shabaab has historically used the provision of services—such as education, justice, taxation, and now, healthcare—to extend its influence in Somalia. While these services are often rudimentary, al-Shabaab often provides them more efficiently than the Somali government, according to the DIA.⁵⁵ However, it is unclear how effective al-Shabaab's COVID-19 healthcare services have been in curbing the spread of the virus.

ISIS-Somalia Targets Police and Government

ISIS-Somalia launched limited attacks in Somalia during the quarter, according to ACLED data. Most of the attacks occurred in the northeastern Bari province, where the group is based.⁵⁶ ISIS-Somalia also claimed responsibility for an IED attack in Mogadishu, although its role in the attack has not been verified.⁵⁷ The number of ISIS-Somalia attacks during the quarter was similar to previous quarters.⁵⁸

USAFRICOM reported that in May, security forces from the Somali state of Puntland, which includes Bari province, launched several operations targeting VEOs in the region, resulting in the arrest of more than a dozen suspected ISIS members.⁵⁹

ISIS in Mozambique: An Emerging Threat

A violent ISIS-linked insurgency in northern Mozambique, known locally as Ahlu Sunna Wa-Jamma, has grown rapidly since its first attack in northern Cabo Delgado province in October 2017.⁶⁰ ACLED recorded 120 violent events in Cabo Delgado during the quarter, an increase from 78 in the previous quarter. The majority of these events involved the emerging ISIS affiliate and appeared to target civilians.⁶¹ (See Figure 2.)

USAFRICOM assessed that ISIS in Mozambique represents “an emerging threat to U.S. interests in East Africa.” The extremists’ attacks against Mozambican security forces, civilians, and infrastructure demonstrate the group’s growing capabilities and effectiveness. So far, USAFRICOM said, the Mozambican government’s response has not succeeded in combating the group’s growing reach and influence.⁶²

The DoS said that while the extremists lack a leader or manifesto, the group has been supported by foreign fighters from countries such as Tanzania, with possible financial support from elsewhere in East Africa.⁶³ Mozambique’s porous border with Tanzania facilitates access by foreign extremists. The DoS reported that Mozambique has sought U.S. assistance to suppress the violent extremist threat, but the Mozambican government has also turned to long-time security partner Russia for assistance.⁶⁴ In 2019, the Mozambican government hired the Wagner Group, the Russian private military contractor that is active in Libya, to suppress the ISIS-linked insurgency in Cabo Delgado. After the Wagner Group suffered several defeats and left the country, the Mozambican government turned to the South African Dyck Advisory Group, which remained in Cabo Delgado during the quarter.⁶⁵

Figure 2.
Cabo Delgado Locator Map



One of the world's largest offshore natural gas reserves was recently discovered in northern Cabo Delgado, which could make Mozambique a top natural gas supplier for the next century. ExxonMobil, the Export-Import Bank of the United States, and other U.S. entities seek to have a stake in developing these assets to provide energy security and direct economic benefits to the United States. A Chinese energy company currently holds a 20 percent stake in one of the two major natural gas projects in Cabo Delgado.⁶⁶ The DoS reported that unrealistic expectations about the timing and scope of the natural gas windfall may leave some residents susceptible to joining criminal or extremist groups.⁶⁷

PARTNER FORCE DEVELOPMENT

In 2017, members of the international community committed to a Security Pact for Somalia under which the United States and other countries agreed to provide political and material support to the Somali security forces according to a 10-year timeline.⁶⁸ The Pact lists several objectives for the 2018-2021 period, including containing the al-Shabaab threat and building an SNA that is able to control major population centers and supply routes.⁶⁹ Today, several nations and multinational organizations support the development of the Somali security forces and Somalia's ability to counter VEOs.

The focus of USAFRICOM's advisory efforts in Somalia is building the Danab ("Lightning") Brigade, an advanced infantry component of the SNA designed to liberate Somali territory held by al-Shabaab forces.⁷⁰ The DoS, through its security assistance programs, supports the development of the SNA (including the Danab Brigade), AMISOM, and the Somali Ministry of Defense.⁷¹ AMISOM provides training to Somali forces and conducts sustained offensive operations against al-Shabaab. The European Union Training Mission in Somalia also supports the development of Somali forces and defense institutions, as do several other countries on a bilateral basis.

USAFRICOM reported that it engages directly with Somali institutions through the Military Coordination Cell (MCC) at the U.S. Embassy in Mogadishu as well as through the embassy's Senior Defense Officer/Defense Attaché and the Office of Security Cooperation.⁷² The MCC, on behalf of the U.S. Ambassador to Somalia, oversees coordination of international efforts to accelerate the development of Somali national security institutions and forces under the 2017 Security Pact.⁷³ The MCC also supports quarterly engagements between the U.S. Ambassador and Somali government representatives to develop strategic policies related to the development of SNA institutions.⁷⁴

USAFRICOM Adjusts Advising Due to COVID-19

USAFRICOM reported that COVID-19 restricted the international community's ability to effectively engage with the SNA.⁷⁵ USAFRICOM provided advise-and-assist support to partner forces in Somalia remotely for most of the quarter.⁷⁶

Despite adjustments to its advisory support, USAFRICOM supported ongoing SNA operations. For example, in June, U.S. forces conducted remote advise-and-assist operations with the SNA as they worked to clear and secure al-Shabaab strongholds in Janaale.⁷⁷ The rainy season and the month of Ramadan also posed constraints on Somali forces during the quarter and USAFRICOM's efforts to support them.⁷⁸

Danab Brigade Training Continues

The DoD and DoS continued efforts to develop the Danab Advanced Infantry Brigade during the quarter. The DoS, through a contractor called Bancroft Global Development, funds individual training of Danab Brigade soldiers. Upon completion of individual training, Danab Brigade soldiers proceed to DoD-led collective training. SOCAFRICA reported that 86 soldiers began and completed collective training during the quarter.⁷⁹

Once fully established, the Danab Brigade is expected to number 3,000 soldiers positioned across the country, though it may not reach this full force strength in the near term.⁸⁰ USAFRICOM reported that when the Danab reaches its planned full force strength, the Danab Brigade will be “roughly equivalent to a U.S. general purpose infantry brigade.”⁸¹ The Danab Brigade is designed to consist of five 500-man maneuver battalions and seven support companies. The support companies will include a dedicated training company, an advanced training company, a port authority company, a transportation company, a support company, a headquarters company, and a garrison with life-support capabilities.⁸²

The Danab Brigade is Somalia’s primary force for domestic counterterrorism operations. USAFRICOM reported that the Danab Brigade conducts approximately 25 percent of SNA operations in Somalia but almost all counterterrorism operations against al-Shabaab.⁸³

USAFRICOM reported that its civil affairs units worked with the Danab Brigade (as well as the Puntland Security Forces) to enhance their communication with local leaders. This took place via face-to-face interactions, social media, and other media.⁸⁴ USAFRICOM reported that the Danab Brigade shared those techniques with other forces throughout the region to promote better information sharing.⁸⁵

SNA Demonstrates Improvements Amid Ongoing Weaknesses

USAFRICOM supports the development of SNA institutions and conventional forces through support to Operation Badbaado.⁸⁶ Operation Badbaado is a phased, SNA-led ground offensive to clear, seize, and hold al-Shabaab strongholds along the Shabelle River, limit al-Shabaab’s freedom of movement, and disrupt al-Shabaab’s attack networks in Mogadishu.⁸⁷ The goals of Operation Badbaado are to 1) create a security cocoon around Mogadishu; 2) degrade al-Shabaab; and 3) develop the SNA’s long-term institutional capacity.⁸⁸

Regarding the first two goals, USAFRICOM reported that the SNA “continues to successfully form a safety buffer around Mogadishu,” despite the continuation of al-Shabaab attacks in the capital.⁸⁹ During the quarter, the Somali Police Force increased security patrols and established new checkpoints in districts of southwest Mogadishu during the month of Ramadan.⁹⁰ USAFRICOM said that the Somali Police Force planned to maintain the increased security posture after Ramadan.⁹¹

Most details about the development of the SNA’s institutional capacity, particularly the SNA’s institutional weaknesses, are classified or not publicly releasable. However, one indicator of the SNA’s long-term institutional capacity is its ability to hold territory after liberating it from al-Shabaab. USAFRICOM reported that SNA continued operations to hold territory in the Lower Shabelle region. This region is a focus of Operation Badbaado, USAFRICOM said, because it is key to al-Shabaab’s ability to carry out attacks in

Mogadishu.⁹² In particular, the SNA held territory around Janaale, a former al-Shabaab stronghold that SNA and AMISOM successfully cleared in March 2020.⁹³ Janaale occupies a strategic position along the Shabelle River and a key route to Mogadishu. (See Figure 3.)

During the quarter, the SNA and AMISOM units increased patrols in the Lower Shabelle region to disrupt al-Shabaab activities and clear supply routes of IEDs.⁹⁴ In addition, local and international forces completed repairs on the main supply route from Buufow to Janaale, cleared brush along the route, and delivered solar street lights to Janaale.⁹⁵ USAFRICOM reported that the European Union has committed to pay for the repair of culverts along the route to mitigate flooding.⁹⁶

Despite its success in holding territory, the SNA did not liberate any new territory from al-Shabaab during the quarter.⁹⁷ Following the Janaale seizure, the SNA paused some operations in the Lower Shabelle region due to the rainy season.⁹⁸

USAFRICOM reported that the SNA did show an improvement in its planning capability. Specifically, the Somali Chief of Defense Forces developed the concept of operations for an upcoming SNA convoy with his staff without assistance from European Union Training Mission in Somalia advisors, who could not assist during the quarter because of COVID-19 restrictions.⁹⁹



USAFRICOM said that Operation Badbaado will continue to require partner support. In particular, its operational success will depend heavily on an effective Somali military, political reform, and the creation of much higher force protection capabilities by the SNA, including the Danab Brigade. In addition, long-term success against al-Shabaab will depend on the Somali government's ability to provide security, stabilization, and good governance in the liberated areas.¹⁰⁰

Weak SNA Relationships with Federal State Forces and Clans Undermine Security

In addition to the SNA and other Somali federal security forces, several federal member states have active security forces, as do many powerful clans. Forces under the authority of the federal member states, such as the Puntland Security Forces and the Jubaland Security Forces, conduct operations against al-Shabaab and ISIS-Somalia, and often serve as the primary provider of security in their area. However, analysts have reported that these forces and clan-based militias often do not coordinate with each other.¹⁰¹ In some cases, these state and local forces clash with federal forces and contribute to instability. Some SNA units are more loyal to specific clans than the federal government, providing opportunity for clans to exploit the SNA for their own gain.¹⁰²



AMISOM and SNA officers attend a training course on intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance in Mogadishu. (AMISOM photo)



USAFRICOM said that the Somali government’s relationship with the federal member states is strained, and clan-based relationships “continue to present roadblocks for the long-term security situation in Somalia,” and that tensions within some of these relationships “[complicate] the fight against al-Shabaab.”¹⁰³

In June, according to the DoS, Somali President Mohamed Abedlahi—known commonly as “Farmaajo”—held a virtual meeting with federal member state presidents in an effort to normalize relations and resume discussions on national issues, including elections, economic development, and security.¹⁰⁴



**Somalia President
Mohamed Abedlahi
“Farmaajo”**

AMISOM Continues Mission Despite COVID-19 Restrictions

USAFRICOM reported that AMISOM, a UN-funded mission, demonstrated improvements in its capability to undertake missions in Somalia, despite COVID-19 restrictions on movement. The United Nations placed a moratorium on the movement of forces conducting UN missions that extended through the quarter.¹⁰⁵

AMISOM troops conducted successful convoy operations during the quarter. For example, Ethiopian forces executed a logistical convoy from their base in Ethiopia to Baidoa to supply Ethiopian forces participating in the AMISOM mission. USAFRICOM reported that the move was difficult because al-Shabaab placed IEDs throughout the route.¹⁰⁶ In addition, the AMISOM Mobility Unit conducted a convoy in Mogadishu. USAFRICOM reported that the AMISOM team uses medical personal protective equipment and social distancing whenever possible within the convoy.¹⁰⁷

AMISOM troops also completed successful joint operations during the quarter, USAFRICOM reported. For example, Ugandan forces conducted a joint operation with the SNA in the Lower Shabelle region. The Ugandan forces provided all of the enabler support for joint Somali-Ugandan operations to clear and hold Janaale and provided additional fire support to the SNA. Ugandan forces also provided a mobile infantry unit, a reconnaissance unit, and engineering support for the operations.¹⁰⁸

USAFRICOM reported it anticipated a significant surge in AMISOM troop movement as member forces resume troop rotations that were halted as part of COVID-19 response measures.¹⁰⁹

New UN Mandate Includes Changes for AMISOM

In May, the UN Security Council voted to renew AMISOM's mandate through February 2021.¹¹⁰ The resolution included new requirements that will present challenges for the AMISOM mission, USAFRICOM reported.¹¹¹ Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda contribute troops to the AMISOM mission. Chad, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe contribute personnel to AMISOM's police mission.¹¹²

The resolution did not change AMISOM troop or police levels. The resolution authorized African Union member states to maintain a deployment of 19,626 AMISOM personnel and 1,040 police personnel.¹¹³ However, rather than its typical 1-year review of the AMISOM mission, the UN Security Council extended the mandate for only 8 months.¹¹⁴ According to USAFRICOM, AMISOM viewed the shorter extension as “a major loss.”¹¹⁵

The resolution called on the Somali government and its federal member states to lead the revision of the Somali Transition Plan, the 2018 agreement that outlines a gradual plan to transition AMISOM security functions to Somali forces by the end of 2021.¹¹⁶ According to the United Nations, AMISOM and the Somali government have made progress under the plan, including the recent transfer of the national stadium and a military academy—both in Mogadishu—from AMISOM to the SNA. However, the United Nations noted this quarter that integrated planning and operations among AMISOM, the SNA, and international partners has “slowed,” and unplanned withdrawals of AMISOM forces from operating locations has left SNA forces vulnerable to attack.¹¹⁷ According to USAFRICOM, it is the international community's assessment that this slow progress toward the Somali Transition Plan's goals “is a result of the Somali government's inability to cope with the complexity of dealing with al-Shabaab in a clan-based region.”¹¹⁸

The proposed re-write of the Somali Transition Plan seeks to reconfigure AMISOM to address these challenges.¹¹⁹ USAFRICOM said that the current plan is seen as biased and Mogadishu-centric.¹²⁰ The resolution reaffirms the goal to transition security to Somali forces by the end of 2021.¹²¹ The Somali government has agreed to complete the re-write by September 2020.¹²²

The resolution also calls upon the African Union to strengthen the coordination of AMISOM and SNA planning and operations.¹²³ USAFRICOM said that this is an effort to strengthen AMISOM's role as a “combat mentor” to the SNA.¹²⁴

Apart from the AMISOM mission, the resolution increased the allocation of UN-supported SNA personnel from 10,900 to 13,900, with the intent for the increase to include the personnel for a specialized police force called the Federal Darwish Police.¹²⁵ USAFRICOM said that deployment of, and logistics support to, the Darwish is seen as a key component of future stability operations in Somalia.¹²⁶

DoD Assistance to Kenya Limited During the Quarter

USAFRICOM reported that its capacity-building activities in Kenya during the quarter were limited but included key leader engagements and surveys of a Kenyan airport and forward operating base.¹²⁷

In addition, SOCAFRICA reported that U.S. special operations forces provided intelligence support to Kenyan forces in support of counterterrorism missions. U.S. special operations forces have also provided Kenyan forces with equipment to penetrate dense foliage and supported their development of command and control and planning for future operations.¹²⁸

DIPLOMACY AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Somali Elections Delayed

In June, Somalia's National Independent Electoral Commission announced to international media that it planned to delay the country's parliamentary and presidential elections, which were originally scheduled to take place in November, due to "significant security and technical challenges."¹²⁹ For months, international observers had noted that insecurity, slow progress in building an electoral system, and the COVID-19 pandemic would challenge the Somali government's ability to hold the elections.¹³⁰

The head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia previously described the elections as a "historical milestone" for Somalia.¹³¹ In February, Somalia's president signed a new election law, which introduced one-person, one-vote direct voting for the elections. In Somalia's 2016-2017 elections, Somalia's clans elected delegates who voted for leaders.¹³²

The DoS reported that Somalia's federal government and member state governments are negotiating election timing and modalities.¹³³ The United States has emphasized that elections need to be free and fair, credible, timely, secure, practical, implementable, and built on broad-based consensus in a Somali-owned and Somali-led process.¹³⁴

STABILIZATION AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

COVID-19 in Somalia: Poor Health Services, Food Insecurity, and Economic Decline

COVID-19 continued to spread in Somalia during the quarter. As of the end of the quarter, 43 percent of tests in Somalia were positive for COVID-19, according to the United Nations.¹³⁵ According to the WHO, Somalia's health system is one of the least prepared to detect, report, and respond to epidemics. (See Figure 4.) Somalia ranks 194 of 195 countries on the Global Health Security Index.¹³⁶

The pandemic indirectly impacted food security in Somalia, according to the USAID-funded Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSNET). Annual external remittances are projected to decline by 30 to 50 percent in the future. Annual livestock exports in 2020 are expected to be 25 to 35 percent below normal, due to reduced exports to the Hajj pilgrimage. At the same time, costs of imported staple foods rose by between 7 and 13 percent from March to May and are expected to remain above average. Humanitarian actors provided assistance to 2.2 million people in May, though 20 percent of the 2.7 million people in need could not be reached by humanitarian actors due to access constraints. High malnutrition rates, weak health services, and poor water, sanitation, and hygiene infrastructure leave Somalis particularly vulnerable to the direct health impacts of COVID-19.¹³⁷

Figure 4.

COVID-19 Cases in East Africa, as of June 30, 2020



	SOMALIA	KENYA	ETHIOPIA	DJIBOUTI
Total cases	2,924	6,366	5,846	4,682
Total deaths	90	148	103	54



Somalia's Healthcare System



PER **100,000**
People



FOR MORE
THAN

15
MILLION
People

Source: World Health Organization, "COVID-19 Situation Update for the WHO Africa Region," 7/1/2020; "COVID-19, Locusts, Flooding: WHO and Triple Threat in Somalia," 6/23/2020.

USAID Provides Additional Humanitarian Assistance and Adapts Current Activities to Respond to COVID-19

The USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA)—formerly the Office of Food for Peace and Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance—reported that it planned to provide a total of \$17.6 million in new emergency assistance in Somalia from the COVID-19 International Development Assistance supplemental appropriations.¹³⁸

One focus of the BHA's response is on frontline health facilities. According to USAID, during the quarter, BHA implementers provided safe water and sanitation services at health facilities and installed temporary isolation points. The implementers also trained health facility staff and community health workers on infection prevention and control strategies and triage methods for people who were potentially infected with COVID-19. BHA implementers provided logistical support and air transportation for the humanitarian community, including delivering life-saving supplies and equipment to more than 27 locations across Somalia.¹³⁹

In addition, USAID reported that BHA implementers provided services within communities. A BHA implementer conducted a mass awareness campaign through social media, radio, and television.¹⁴⁰ More than half of the migrants passing through Somalia were unaware of COVID-19, according to the International Organization for Migration.¹⁴¹ BHA reported that an implementer promoted safe hygiene practices and expanded water and sanitation services in communities impacted by the pandemic. BHA implementers also strengthened monitoring and response to emergency protection challenges for children and vulnerable groups, to address situations when the main caretakers of children would need to be isolated or cases of abuse, violence, and neglect of children associated with COVID-19.¹⁴²

USAID reported that it adapted existing assistance programs in Somalia to ensure implementer staff and beneficiary safety during the pandemic. For example, BHA emergency programs now incorporate COVID-19 public health and hygiene messaging for beneficiaries. BHA implementers have also been provided double rations of emergency food assistance, which should last up to 2 months, to reduce the frequency with which beneficiaries need to gather to receive assistance. In addition, USAID reported that implementers procured additional medical supplies and hygiene resources (e.g., handwashing stations, soap, and hand sanitizer) for implementer staff and beneficiaries at project sites with the cost savings from reduced travel and other expenses.¹⁴³

USAID Adapts Monitoring to Address COVID-19 Restrictions

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Somalia implemented a nighttime curfew, flight suspensions, and quarantines for people with symptoms, among other restrictions.¹⁴⁴ USAID reported that to adjust to these restrictions and for health safety concerns, USAID approved its third-party monitor to transition to remote monitoring, including revised questionnaires, procedures, and timelines. USAID third-party monitors also leveraged similar remote monitoring approaches for USAID programs in Yemen and Iraq.¹⁴⁵

USAID said that it verifies remote monitoring data by comparing it against information from other sources. Specifically, the third-party monitor reports on interviews with



AMISOM soldiers offload medical supplies that will be used to combat COVID-19 in Somalia. (AMISOM photo)

implementers, key informants in the community, and beneficiaries, and verifies implementer documents. USAID compares the third-party reports with implementer information received directly from the implementer. Furthermore, the annual data quality assessment of select program activities will, according to USAID, include the standard level of scrutiny despite the intention to conduct it remotely.¹⁴⁶

USAID Monitors Locust Infestation, Supports Control Efforts

East African countries are experiencing the worst locust infestation in more than 25 years. The desert locust is a highly destructive pest, able to travel by wind up to 150 kilometers per day and eat large amounts of vegetation, including crops and pasture.¹⁴⁷ USAID reported that ongoing flooding and wet conditions in Somalia led to growth of vegetation for desert locusts to eat and moist soil for the locusts to lay eggs and continue breeding.¹⁴⁸ Without control measures, the World Bank estimated there will be \$8.5 billion in losses related to the current locust crisis, including loss of staple crops, livestock production, and other asset damages.¹⁴⁹

USAID's response to the desert locust infestation continued during the quarter despite COVID-19-related delays and ongoing insecurity. USAID reported that COVID-19-related travel restrictions, border closures, and supply chain disruptions caused delays in staffing and procurement. Implementers planned to spray areas controlled by the Somali government in the future. However, implementers will likely not be able to mitigate the infestation in areas controlled by armed groups.¹⁵⁰

USAID reported that the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations collaborated with governments to accelerate the provision of assistance despite COVID-19 restrictions. For example, affected governments adjusted COVID-19 quarantine requirements and movement restrictions to allow essential personnel to travel to, and within, the locust-infested countries. The Food and Agriculture Organization and affected governments also revised procurement plans for key commodities, such as sourcing materials locally. Control teams treated 902,000 acres—an area the size of Rhode Island—in 10 countries, as of June.¹⁵¹

USAID reported that it monitored the trajectory of the swarms, needs and gaps in locust control operations, and the impact of the infestation on livelihoods and food security. USAID reported that it expected that the need for food assistance will continue in Somalia and will extend across the entire Horn of Africa region, given increased food insecurity associated with the crop damage already caused by the desert locust as well as recent heavy flooding and other climatic shocks. USAID stated it will consider further funding for food assistance and surveillance and control operations, depending on the evolving infestations and the contributions of other donors.¹⁵²

USAID OTI Closes Somalia Office with Review of Accomplishments

USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) ended its program in Somalia on May 31.¹⁵³ An OTI assessment determined that, given stalled progress in recovering territory from al-Shabaab and because OTI programs are designed to be short-term, it would be best to consolidate all stabilization efforts into one program managed by the USAID Somalia Mission.¹⁵⁴ OTI reported that over the 4 years of the program, it assisted the Somali government and local communities in creating a credible alternative to al-Shabaab. For example, the Somali government created a 50-kilometer security and governance bubble around Kismayo, allowing more than 1,000 families to return, depriving al-Shabaab of a revenue base, and establishing a stable perimeter around a key port.¹⁵⁵

Additionally, OTI reported that the program enabled those in recovered and al-Shabaab-controlled territories to connect with the government and access critical information. Through support to state government institutions, the OTI program built the capacity of public and community radio stations, with a radio network that now reaches more than 4 million people. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the radio network was also able to provide vulnerable communities with public health messages.¹⁵⁶

The U.S. Embassy in Mogadishu responded to flood-related needs by providing more than 255,000 people with food, nutrition support, medical supplies, safe drinking water, and emergency shelter. (U.S. Embassy Mogadishu photo)





NORTH AFRICA

Under the North and West Africa Counterterrorism Operation, USAFRICOM seeks to counter ISIS-Libya and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in North Africa, particularly in Libya.

Counterterrorism operations in North Africa fall under Line of Effort 4 (Contain Instability in Libya) in the USAFRICOM campaign plan, under which the command seeks to degrade VEOs in Libya and the Maghreb.¹ USAFRICOM provides equipment, intelligence, logistical assistance, and security training to partner forces in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. USAFRICOM also retains the ability to conduct airstrikes in Libya.²

The U.S. Embassy in Tripoli suspended operations inside Libya in 2014 due to increasing conflict and moved its operations to Malta and, ultimately, Tunisia. The current mission to Libya, called the Libya External Office (LEO), is co-located with the U.S. Embassy in Tunis and conducts very limited diplomatic travel and engagements inside Libya. LEO diplomats are accredited to both Tunisia and Libya. Despite its current location in Tunis, the LEO often refers to itself as the “U.S. Embassy Libya” or the “U.S. Embassy in Tripoli.”³

STATUS OF THE CONFLICT

ISIS-Libya Resumes Attacks

AQIM activity has historically been very limited. ISIS-Libya activity has been limited since 2019, though ISIS-Libya resumed attacks this quarter after several months of inactivity.⁴ USAFRICOM reported that it observed no changes to VEO tactics in North Africa this quarter that could be attributed to COVID-19.⁵ However, the deployment of thousands of foreign mercenaries to Libya who are not monitored for COVID-19 increased the likelihood of spreading the virus between conflict zones in Libya.⁶

Similarly, U.S. counterterrorism activities in the region have been limited, especially in the past year. USAFRICOM withdrew its small number of forces from Libya in April 2019 due to the unpredictable security environment on the ground and the ongoing civil war.⁷ USAFRICOM reported that it continued to monitor VEOs in Libya during the quarter even though it did not employ any aerial or ground ISR this quarter.⁸



IEDs (left) and an anti-personnel mine (right) were discovered in Tripoli, Libya. These devices were connected to the Russian-backed Wagner Group. (USAFRICOM photos)



ISIS-LIBYA

During the quarter, ISIS-Libya claimed responsibility for a VBIED attack against a security checkpoint in Taraghin, which is located 600 miles south of Tripoli. There were no reported casualties. According to media reporting, it was the first attack by ISIS-Libya in more than a year.⁹

The bombing was one of several small-scale attacks in May and June claimed by ISIS-Libya that used rockets or small arms and targeted the Libyan National Army (LNA) and civilians supporting the LNA in the southern Fezzan region.¹⁰ The LNA had occupied key locations in the region before reallocating military resources to the north to battle resurgent Government of National Accord (GNA) militias, according to a media report.¹¹

USAFRICOM assessed that ISIS-Libya has remained significantly degraded since the September 2019 drone strikes in southwest Libya against ISIS-Libya that targeted several of the group's senior leaders, who were living in desert camps.¹²

AQIM

USAFRICOM assessed that AQIM remained capable of conducting IED and small arms fire attacks against local security forces in North Africa.¹³ The group began prioritizing support efforts last year as a facilitator of fighters, money, and weapons to its main affiliate in West Africa, Jama'at Nusrat al Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM), according to the DIA.¹⁴

AQIM suffered a significant loss during the quarter when French forces killed its leader in northern Mali near the Algerian border on June 3. (See p. 46.) USAFRICOM said it provided ISR support to that operation.¹⁵

LNA Leaves Mass Graves Following Tripoli Defeat

The Libyan civil war between the UN-supported GNA and the LNA continued during the quarter. A U.S. Embassy in Libya press release in May said that the United States “is proud to partner with the legitimate, UN-recognized government of Libya, the GNA, and all those who are prepared to protect freedom and peace.”¹⁶

During the quarter, the LNA lost key terrain around Tripoli, in northwest Libya. USAFRICOM reported that LNA losses included major airbases used to support unmanned aircraft and deliver forces to areas around Tripoli. The territorial defeats prompted LNA forces to retreat to the east toward the coastal city of Sirte.¹⁷

The conflict continued to result in widespread death and displacement among civilians and local and international combatants fighting in the conflict. The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) documented 356 casualties during the quarter, including 102 civilian deaths, a 172 percent increase from the previous quarter.¹⁸

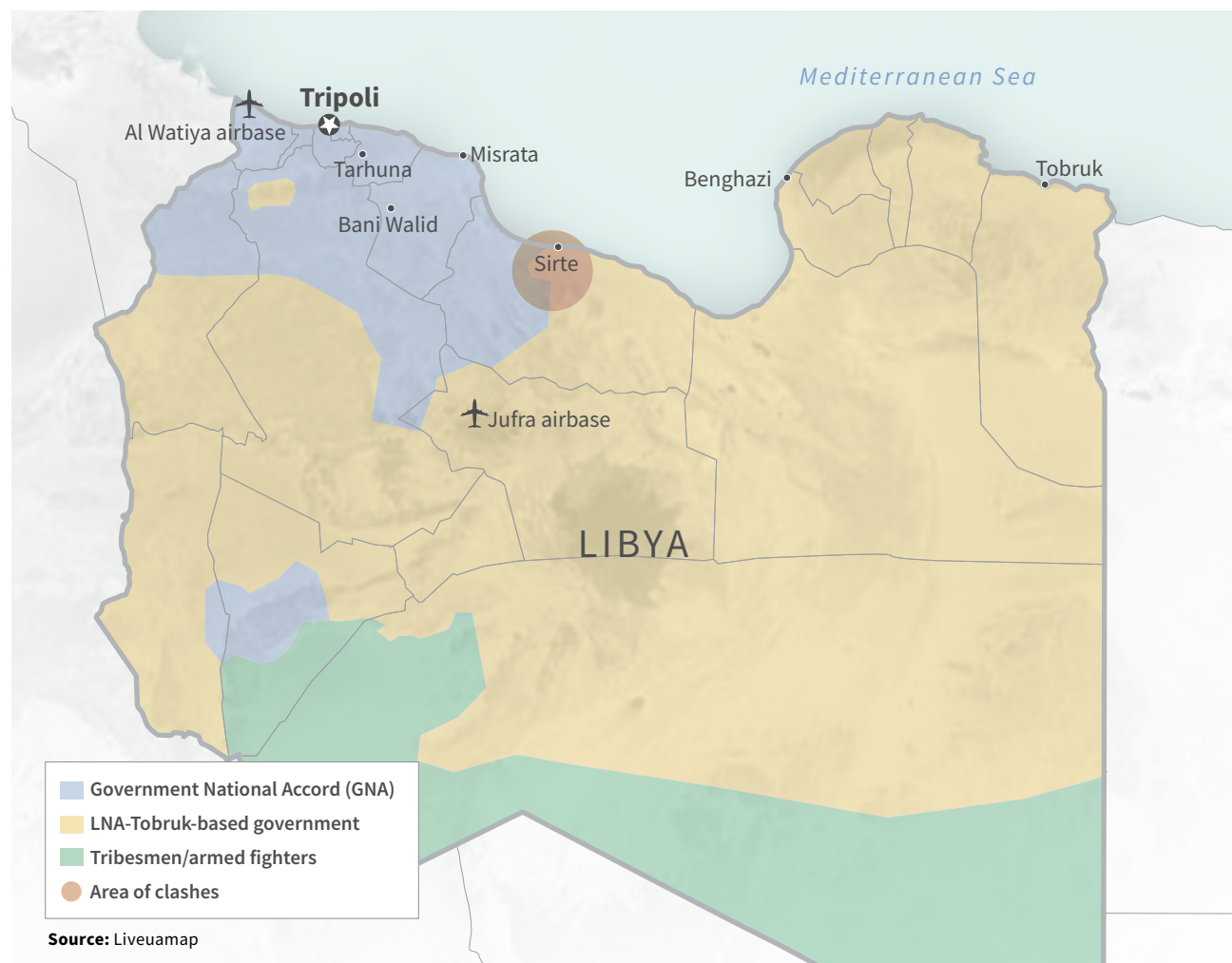
In June, UNSMIL announced the discovery of at least eight mass grave sites in Tarhouna, a former LNA stronghold approximately 60 miles southeast of Tripoli.¹⁹ According to media reporting, the GNA exhumed 208 bodies and remains of “another unknown number of victims” in June. GNA forces also told reporters that at least 158 corpses were found in a Tarhouna hospital hours after LNA troops fled the city.²⁰

The LNA battlefield losses during the quarter did not end the conflict. The LNA retained influence over a majority of territory in Libya—especially in the east where most of Libya’s oil reserves are located—while the GNA retained control over territory comprising the majority of Libya’s population.²¹ (See Figure 5.) The LNA received support in varying forms from Russia, Egypt, France, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates, according to the DoS and media reporting.²² The GNA received support primarily from Turkey, with additional assistance from Italy and Qatar.²³

Turkey Expands Paramilitary Operations to Aid the GNA

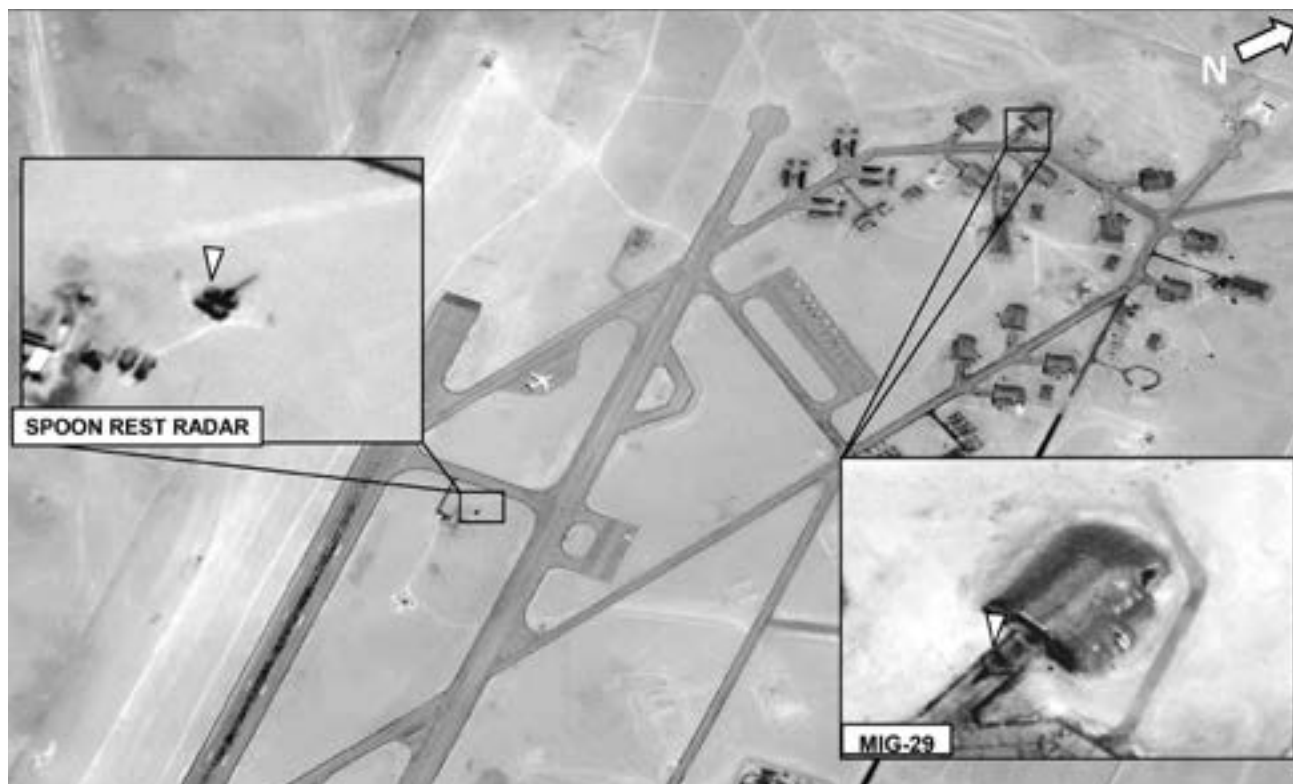
Turkey’s support of the GNA, including its deployment of Syrian mercenaries and Turkish regular troops, contributed to the GNA military gains in northwest Libya during the quarter. According to USAFRICOM, Turkey’s introduction of Turkey-Supported Syrian Opposition mercenaries to Libya provided GNA-aligned militias the ability to reorganize their areas of control and hold terrain. The militias’ support to Syrian mercenaries fighting on the front lines also contributed to the GNA’s territorial gains.²⁴ The DoS said that the United States opposes the introduction of all foreign forces in Libya.²⁵

Figure 5.

Conflict Areas in Libya, June 2020

USAFRICOM assessed that the Syrian mercenaries, who worked closely with Turkey in Syria, likely arrived by Turkish military aircraft. Turkey maintains regular flights between Istanbul and Tripoli to conduct materiel resupply.²⁶ USAFRICOM estimated that several dozen military trainers from a Turkish private military company, Sadat, were deployed to Tripoli to train both GNA-aligned militias and Syrian fighters. Sadat maintains supervision and payment of the estimated 5,000 pro-GNA Syrian fighters in Libya, according to USAFRICOM.²⁷

In addition to Turkish-Supported Syrian Opposition mercenaries, Turkey has also deployed several hundred regular military forces to Libya. These individuals included trainers, advisors, ordnance disposal personnel—a large number of IEDs have been found in southern Tripoli—and operators and maintainers of Turkish air defense systems.²⁸



While the Syrian mercenaries have bolstered GNA operations, their continued presence will continue to negatively affect the overall security situation in Libya. USAFRICOM described the Syrian mercenaries fighting in Libya as “inexperienced, uneducated, and motivated by promises of considerable salary.”²⁹ USAFRICOM added that there were increasing reports of theft, sexual assault, and misconduct by those mercenaries, which is likely to further degrade the security situation and generate backlash from the Libyan public.³⁰ USAFRICOM said that extremists with previous terrorist links were involved in the Tripoli fighting, although it is possible they were fighting for financial and personal reasons rather than ideological reasons.³¹

Photographic evidence of a Russian MiG-29 and a Russian-made mobile early warning radar system called a Spoon Rest at a facility near the city of Sirte. (USAFRICOM photo)

Russia Increases Paramilitary Forces in Libya

Russia’s presence in Libya remained a concern for the U.S. Government during the quarter.³² The Russian government supports private military companies in Libya, principally the Wagner Group. Russia has also committed numerous violations of international law, according to USAFRICOM, including a direct violation of the longstanding UN arms embargo to Libya.³³ Analysts have noted that the conflict in Libya has devolved into a proxy war, or “the new Syria,” with Russia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt competing for access and influence.³⁴

The DIA assessed that the growing Wagner Group presence gives Russia increased influence over the outcome of the Libyan civil war. Since its initial deployment in 2019,

USAFRICOM estimated that Russian support to the LNA this quarter included approximately 3,000 Wagner Group mercenaries and approximately 2,000 Syrian mercenaries sponsored by Russia.

the Wagner Group has provided advanced equipment, such as unmanned aircraft systems, and advanced capabilities, such as trained snipers, to the conflict, resulting in significant casualties to forces aligned with the GNA.³⁵ The DoS described the Wagner Group as a surrogate of the Russian Ministry of Defense.³⁶

LNA commander Khalifa Haftar receives substantial support from the Wagner Group. USAFRICOM estimated that Russian support to the LNA this quarter included approximately 3,000 Wagner Group mercenaries and approximately 2,000 Syrian mercenaries sponsored by Russia.³⁷ This reflects an increase from previous quarters, when media reports estimated that the Wagner Group's presence in Libya ranged from 800 to 2,500 personnel supported by 300 to 400 Russian-sponsored Syrian mercenaries.³⁸

In June, Wagner Group forces took control of Libya's largest oil field and export terminal, according to media reporting.³⁹ The seizure of the facilities extended the LNA's shutdown of oil supply and revenue—begun in January 2020—and reduced revenues to the National Oil Corporation based in Tripoli, which sends oil revenues to the Central Bank of Libya for disbursal throughout the country.⁴⁰

Russia also provides illicit financial support to the LNA. A DoS press release in May stated that the Maltese government seized \$1.1 billion of counterfeit Libyan currency that was printed by a state-owned Russian company. The press release indicated that Russia has been printing counterfeit Libyan currency for several years, with destabilizing effects on Libya's economy.⁴¹

The United States continued to publicly and privately call for an end to foreign interference in Libya, highlighting in particular the destructive role played by the Wagner Group. In June, DoS Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs David Schenker noted his concern about “the continued influx of Russian military equipment, weapons, and Wagner Group mercenaries, whose presence led to the significant Turkish intervention.”⁴²

USAFRICOM Releases Photos of Russian Attack Jets in Libya

In a June press release, USAFRICOM published a series of photos exposing what USAFRICOM called Russia's malign involvement in escalating the Libyan civil war.⁴³ The introduction of advanced manned, armed Russian aircraft into Libya “changes the nature of the current conflict and intensifies the potential risk to all Libyans, especially innocent civilians,” USAFRICOM said.⁴⁴ The press release included a series of 15 images showing Russian aircraft en route to and on the ground at various air bases in Libya.⁴⁵

In total, USAFRICOM said, at least 14 MiG-29s and several Su-24s were flown from Russia to Syria to be repainted for the purpose of disguising their country of origin before the combat aircraft were delivered to Libya.⁴⁶ USAFRICOM said that the Russian fighter aircraft have the ability to support air-to-ground strike and air interdiction missions.⁴⁷

USAFRICOM stated in the press release that “there is concern that these Russian aircraft are being flown by inexperienced, non-state [Wagner Group] mercenaries who will not adhere to international law; namely, they are not bound by the traditional laws of armed conflict.”⁴⁸

In remarks to the media, the commander of U.S. Air Forces in Europe-Air Forces Africa assessed that the Wagner Group contracted retired pilots or others with some experience in the aircraft but lacked proficiency, raising concerns about the pilots' ability to accurately strike targets.⁴⁹

France Suspends Participation in NATO Operation Following Dispute with Turkey

Tensions between two NATO member states heightened this quarter following a maritime incident in the eastern Mediterranean involving French and Turkish vessels. On June 10, according to media reporting, a French frigate under NATO command was denied access when it attempted to inspect a Tanzania-flagged cargo ship suspected of smuggling weapons to Libya in violation of the UN arms embargo. The French government accused three Turkish Navy vessels that were escorting the cargo ship of impeding the inspection through their use of aggressive naval tactics. Further, France claimed that its ship was illuminated three times by the targeting radar of a Turkish warship.⁵⁰ Turkey denied France's allegations, accused the French frigate of acting aggressively, and claimed the cargo ship was carrying humanitarian aid to Libya.⁵¹

Dissatisfied with NATO's investigation of the incident, France announced on June 30 that it was temporarily suspending its participation in NATO's "Operation Sea Guardian," a maritime security effort that aims to maintain maritime situational awareness in the Mediterranean.⁵²

France, the United States' lead partner for counterterrorism operations in West Africa, publicly stated that it supports a political resolution to the conflict in Libya. However, France has also provided military and diplomatic support to the Russian-backed LNA, according to media reporting.⁵³ French President Emmanuel Macron accused Turkey of "massively importing" jihadist fighters from Syria to Libya.⁵⁴ According to media reporting, Turkey refuted the French president's assertion and said that Turkey continues to support the GNA.⁵⁵

"The world heard Mr. Haftar declare he was about to unleash a new air campaign. That will be Russian mercenary pilots flying Russian-supplied aircraft to bomb Libyans."

—General Stephen Townsend, Commander, USAFRICOM



A Russian fighter aircraft arrived in Libya from an airbase in Russia. DoD assessed that it was repainted to camouflage its Russian origin. (DoD photo)

The U.S. Government has not publicly responded to France’s temporary withdrawal from Operation Sea Guardian, or French allegations of Turkey deploying terrorist fighters from Syria to Libya. USAFRICOM said it does not provide any assets to enforce the UN arms embargo in Libya.⁵⁶

Apart from the French frigate, Operation Sea Guardian is supported by an Italian submarine, a Turkish submarine, and several NATO-owned surveillance aircraft under NATO command. These assets maintain maritime situational awareness, support maritime counterterrorism, and enhance capacity building.⁵⁷

Operation Irini, a European Union naval mission with authority under the UN arms embargo to carry out maritime interdictions, is tasked with monitoring and reporting on arms shipments to Libya that violate the UN arms embargo using aerial, maritime and satellite assets. Turkey claimed Operation Irini’s focus was unbalanced, prioritizing maritime transfers over land and air transfers, which would directly affect Russian material shipments to the LNA. The European Union disputes this characterization, noting that the operation’s interdiction mandate is limited to the maritime domain.⁵⁸

A Congressional Research Service report on Libya, released during the quarter, concluded that international powers “appeared to differ on whether or how to defuse the situation or hold specific actors accountable,” referring to continued violence and the proliferation of weapons in Libya.⁵⁹ “Some actors explicitly or implicitly support the continuation of LNA military operations, in spite of consensus ostensibly reached in Berlin in January 2020 and endorsed by the UN Security Council,” the report said.⁶⁰

Egypt Proposes Ceasefire and Political Solution in Libya

On June 6, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi announced a political initiative that called for a ceasefire in Libya, renewed political negotiations between the GNA and LNA, the removal of all foreign mercenaries from Libya, and the resumption of LNA counterterrorism activities against VEOs in Libya.⁶¹ Egypt, along with the United Arab Emirates, Russia, and others, supports the LNA, according to media reporting.⁶²

However, the Turkish government and GNA rejected the Egyptian proposal, claiming it was “insincere” and would effectively require the GNA to “surrender” all security responsibility to the LNA, according to press reporting. Turkish government officials and GNA leadership stated that retaking the LNA-controlled city of Sirte and the nearby al-Jufra air base were preconditions for future political dialogue.⁶³ The al-Jufra airfield is located south of Sirte, which is considered the gateway to Libya’s oil crescent, and houses Russian MiG-29 and Su-24 fighter aircraft, according to USAFRICOM.⁶⁴

President al-Sisi stated that an advance by pro-GNA forces on Sirte and al-Jufra would result in direct military intervention by Egyptian forces, risking a further escalation of the Libyan civil war. As of the end of the quarter, Sirte and al-Jufra remained under LNA control, USAFRICOM reported.⁶⁵

The acting UN Envoy to Libya told a media reporter that UN-brokered discussions had reached consensus on key issues for a ceasefire but that confrontation in Sirte represented a serious risk to peace efforts.⁶⁶

PARTNER FORCE DEVELOPMENT

Reduced Advising Due to COVID-19

In North Africa, COVID-19 restrictions impacted engagement activities related to enhancing partner capacity.⁶⁷ As a result, USAFRICOM said, there was no noteworthy progress to report regarding advisory efforts in the region during the quarter.⁶⁸

During the quarter, General Townsend discussed a deployment of SFAB elements to Tunisia.⁶⁹ The SFAB deployment to Tunisia and elsewhere on the continent, the DoD said, aligns with the DoD's ongoing shift to focus on threats posed by China and Russia.⁷⁰ USAFRICOM told a media reporter that the SFAB's positioning in Tunisia and other African locations "in no way implies combat military forces" are being considered as part of the deployment.⁷¹

USAFRICOM reported that U.S. embassy country teams continued to engage with their host-nation counterparts to develop plans to restart partner force engagements. Additionally, equipment provided under Title 10 U.S.C. Section 333, had been delayed due to the pandemic, which will impact the ability to execute training exercises once activities resume, according to USAFRICOM.⁷²

DIPLOMACY AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

United States Continues to Promote UN-Facilitated Ceasefire in Libya

During the quarter, the United States engaged in diplomatic efforts to promote a UN-facilitated ceasefire and participated in talks about the security, political, and economic situation in Libya. The DoS reported that U.S. mediation between the Libyan parties to the ongoing civil war and their external backers focused on resolving the ongoing LNA shutdown of Libya's oil sector, promoting increased fiscal transparency, and preventing further military escalation.⁷³ In addition, the DoS reported that the United States co-chaired the Economic Working Group of the International Follow-up Committee, the body established to coordinate implementation of the conclusions of the January 2020 Berlin Conference on Libya.⁷⁴

On June 10, following increased violence in Sirte, the U.S. Embassy in Tripoli joined the UNSMIL in calling on all parties to the conflict in Libya to de-escalate, respect their obligations under international humanitarian law, and refrain from acts of retribution and vandalism that unlawfully target civilians and civilian infrastructure.⁷⁵

On June 22, U.S. Ambassador to Libya Richard Norland traveled to the GNA-held city of Zuwara, in western Libya, for the first time. Ambassador Norland, together with General Townsend, met with Libyan Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj to discuss "opportunities for a strategic pause in military operations by all parties to the conflict." The ambassador previously visited eastern Libya in February 2020 to meet with LNA officials.⁷⁶



Ambassador Norland and General Townsend in Zuwara, Libya. (USAFRICOM photo)

According to the DoS, Ambassador Norland emphasized U.S. support for UN diplomatic efforts to promote a ceasefire and political dialogue. General Townsend provided his perspective on the risks of escalation in the conflict, the dangers posed by Russia's support for Wagner Group operations, and the strategic importance of ensuring freedom of navigation in the Mediterranean Sea. General Townsend said that USAFRICOM provided the security that enabled the ambassador's meeting with Prime Minister al-Sarraj.⁷⁷

On June 24, representatives of the U.S. Government and the Libyan Ministry of the Interior met virtually to resume discussions on the demobilization of nongovernmental forces. According to the DoS, the two parties "affirmed that all Libyan citizens should enjoy the protection of capable and accountable security forces, free from the dangers posed by militias, armed groups, and foreign fighters."⁷⁸

During the meeting, the Libyan Ministry of the Interior delegation described its program for the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of militia forces. The U.S. delegation reaffirmed the U.S. opposition to all foreign intervention in Libya and discussed "the imperative of an immediate ceasefire and return to UN-facilitated security and political negotiations." In addition to Ambassador Norland, the United States was represented by a senior director from the National Security Council; a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State; and the USAFRICOM Deputy Director for Strategy, Engagement, and Programs.⁷⁹



WEST AFRICA

Through the North and West Africa Counterterrorism Operation, USAFRICOM seeks to disrupt and contain Boko Haram, ISIS, al-Qaeda, and their affiliates in designated countries in West Africa.¹ Counterterrorism operations and related partner nation support in West Africa fall under Line of Effort 5 (Support Partners in the Sahel and Lake Chad region) in the USAFRICOM campaign plan.²

USAFRICOM said that its approach in West Africa is a combination of operational support to the French counterterrorism mission and bilateral security force assistance to host nations. Protection of U.S. interests, according to USAFRICOM, is achieved by working by, with, and through African partners to respond to crises and security challenges while supporting U.S. allies in their direct counterterrorism assistance to African-led security operations.³



U.S. Ambassador to Mali Dennis Hankins and Malian Minister of Defense and Veterans Affairs Major General Ibrahim Dahirou Dembélé signed a memorandum of understanding for an in-kind fuel donation to the G5 Sahel Joint Force. (USAFRICOM photo)

Several national and multinational security forces conduct counterterrorism operations in West Africa. Security forces from France and the G5 Sahel Joint Force—a coalition of troops from Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger—as well as partner nation militaries conduct those operations with varying degrees of coordination.⁴ The United States does not have authority to conduct direct strikes in the Sahel and Lake Chad region, according to USAFRICOM, except in cases of self-defense.⁵

USAFRICOM supports French counterterrorism efforts with airlift, aerial refueling, intelligence sharing, and ISR. G5 Sahel nations receive additional security assistance from USAFRICOM, including a staff liaison officer embedded at G5 Sahel headquarters in Mauritania. The liaison officer's mission is to maintain visibility of planning efforts, current operations, and coordination for senior leader engagements. In April, the U.S. Ambassador to Mali and the Malian Minister of Defense signed a memorandum of understanding for an in-kind fuel donation to the G5 Sahel Joint Force.⁶

STATUS OF THE CONFLICT

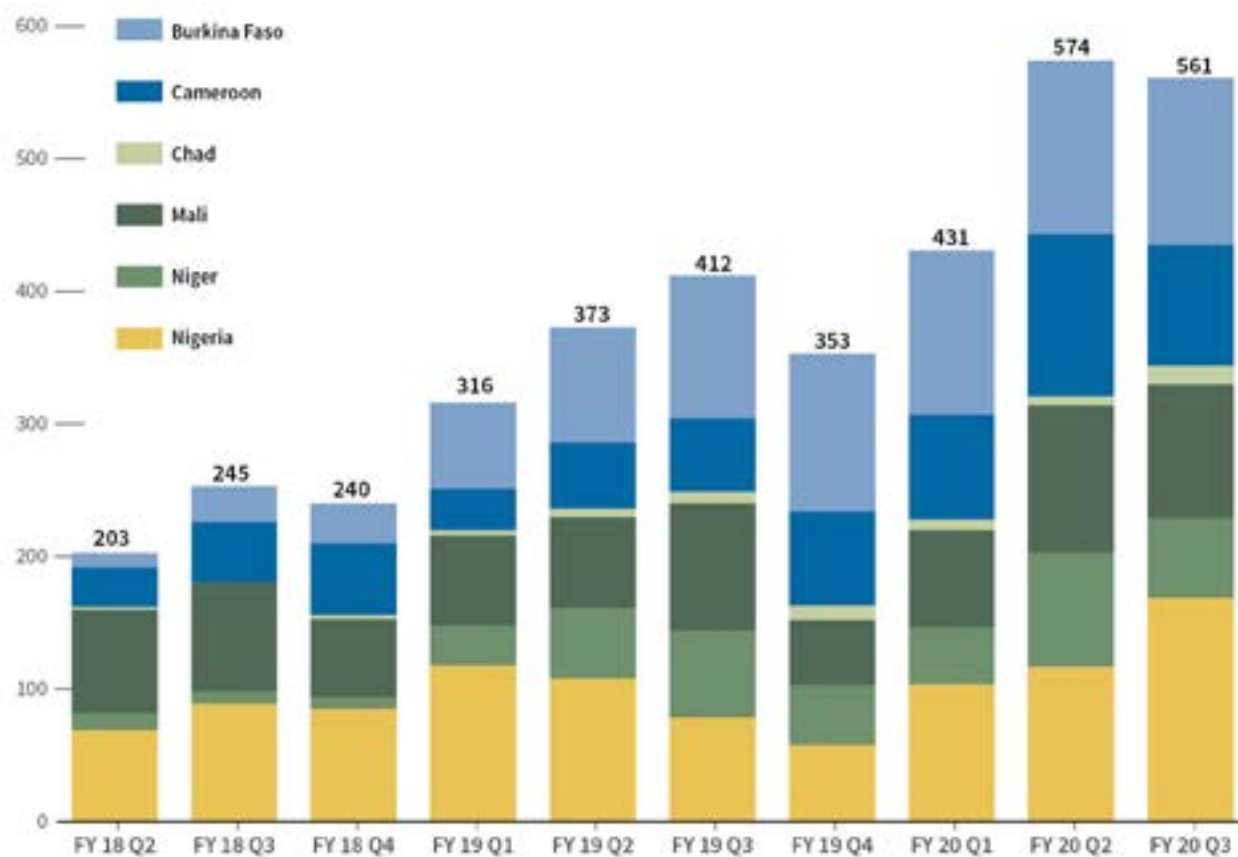
VEO Violence Expands in West Africa

VEOs in West Africa were not contained during the quarter. The combination of the COVID-19 pandemic, ethnic violence, persistent terrorist attacks, and the effects of climate change on farmer-herder conflict and food insecurity have created an “extremely volatile” environment in the Sahel, according to a UN Security Council briefing.⁷ Violence in West African countries continued at elevated levels during the quarter, according to ACLED data. (See Figure 6.) The violence during the quarter reflected a long-term trend of expanding violence in the region.⁸

USAFRICOM said that VEOs expanded their operations to the western Sahel and some northern parts of the West African coastal states.⁹ For example, on June 11, JNIM attacked a Côte d’Ivoire army post near the Burkina Faso border, killing 12 Ivorian security

Figure 6.

Violent Events by Quarter and Country, January 2018–June 2020



Source: ACLED (data for battles, explosions, and violence against civilians)

personnel.¹⁰ According to media reporting, it was the first jihadist attack in Côte d'Ivoire since March 2016. Al-Qaeda and ISIS affiliates continued to move south from Mali and Burkina Faso as other West African nations such as Benin and Togo reported a recent increase in jihadist presence.¹¹

ISIS AFFILIATES

ISIS-West Africa was responsible for some of the deadliest attacks during the quarter. According to USAFRICOM, ISIS-West Africa claimed responsibility for an attack on June 10 in Nigeria's Borno state that killed 81 civilians.¹²

ISIS-West Africa claimed 67 attacks during the quarter against partner military installations or their forces, although some of the attacks may have been conducted by ISIS in the Greater Sahara, which does not have an official media outlet that publicly claims responsibility for attacks. SOCAFRICA assessed that, based on the location of the attacks, at least 10 of the attacks claimed by ISIS-West Africa were perpetrated by ISIS in the Greater Sahara.¹³

SOCAFRICA reported that, while ISIS-West Africa mostly keeps to its base in the Lake Chad region, there was limited reporting to indicate that the group has the intent and capability to expand operations beyond the region. In addition to the June 10 attack in Nigeria's Borno state, ISIS-West Africa was also likely responsible for a series of attacks a few days later in Monguno and Nganzai that resulted in the deaths of 20 Nigerian security personnel and 40 civilians, according to SOCAFRICA.¹⁴

JNIM

JNIM, an al-Qaeda affiliate, claimed 18 attacks during the quarter that targeted partner military installations or their forces, according to USAFRICOM. Most of the attacks occurred during the holy month of Ramadan.¹⁵ The attacks targeted military positions and convoys in Mali and Burkina Faso. USAFRICOM reported that in JNIM's deadliest attack during the quarter, the group targeted a Malian military position in April with mortars and heavy machine guns, killing 30 Malian forces. According to SOCAFRICA, JNIM stated the attack was bolstered by the COVID-19 virus, which the group called a "Soldier of God" that is exhausting Western nations, particularly France and Spain.¹⁶

BOKO HARAM

USAFRICOM estimated that Boko Haram had 1,500 fighters operating in the Lake Chad region during the quarter.¹⁷ Boko Haram's indiscriminate and extreme violence, especially against Muslims, is cited as one reason for ISIS-West Africa's split from the group in 2016, according to media reporting.¹⁸ Because of the shared history of the two groups, and the location of their operations in roughly the same areas of West Africa, some attacks are attributed to both groups.¹⁹

Both Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa took advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic by wreaking "havoc" on communities forced to lock down because of the virus, USAFRICOM said.²⁰ Boko Haram continued to use small arms, IEDs, and pillaging attacks, as well as kidnapping operations against government and civilian targets in the Lake Chad region.²¹

Cooperation Turns to Conflict Among VEOs

USAFRICOM senior leaders stated in March 2020 that VEOs in West Africa were unique because ISIS and al-Qaeda cooperated with each other, a development not seen in other parts of the world.²² This quarter, however, USAFRICOM said it observed escalating hostilities between JNIM and ISIS in the Greater Sahara due to defections of JNIM fighters to ISIS and recent territorial encroachments by ISIS in the Greater Sahara in Mali.²³

According to USAFRICOM, an audio message and accompanying letter, allegedly made by ISIS in the Greater Sahara Deputy Emir Abdul Hakim al-Sahrawi, were circulated on social media on April 10. Al-Sahrawi demanded JNIM pay “blood money” for the killing of two ISIS in the Greater Sahara militants and the release of prisoners held by JNIM. Additionally, intense fighting in late April between the two groups near the Mali-Burkina Faso border resulted in dozens of deaths on each side. JNIM captured 40 motorcycles and an unspecified number of weapons.²⁴



Deputy Emir Abdul
Hakim al-Sahrawi
(Amaq News Agency)

Al-Sahrawi demanded JNIM pay “blood money” for the killing of two ISIS in the Greater Sahara militants and the release of prisoners held by JNIM.

USAFRICOM reported that efforts to resolve the disputes “appear to be falling flat.”²⁵ In early May, ISIS leadership in Iraq and Syria condemned JNIM for negotiating with the Malian government and called JNIM an ally of the Algerian and Mauritania governments in its al-Nabba publication. ISIS claimed four attacks during the quarter against JNIM in Mali near the border with Burkina Faso and inside Burkina Faso.²⁶

Conflict between VEOs was not limited to JNIM and ISIS in the Greater Sahara. In late April, USAFRICOM reported that ISIS-West Africa and Boko Haram clashed near the Diffa region of Niger.²⁷ ISIS-West Africa separated from Boko Haram in 2016 because of Boko Haram’s indiscriminate violence, especially against Muslims.²⁸

French Forces Kill Key al-Qaeda Leader

France leads international counterterrorism operations in West Africa through Operation Barkhane, its largest overseas operation with an estimated 5,100 troops, according to media reports.²⁹ On June 3, French troops killed AQIM leader Abdelmalek Droukdal. USAFRICOM provided ISR support for the operation.³⁰ France’s Minister of the Armed Forces announced that Droukdal died in northern Mali near the Algerian border, along with several associates. A USAFRICOM press release described Droukdal as the “most senior decision-maker of AQIM and the likely architect of the Sahel-based jihadist movement.”³¹ French forces also captured a key ISIS in the Greater Sahara commander in the same region on May 19, according to media reporting.³²

SOCAFRICA reported that it provided ISR support to French counterterrorism operations during the quarter.³³ USAFRICOM said that it has increased efforts to share intelligence with partner forces. Specifically, USAFRICOM reported some success in getting ahead of VEO attacks on military facilities and infrastructure. In several instances, USAFRICOM stated, VEO movements have been disrupted through enhanced early warnings.³⁴

European Task Force to Fight in West Africa

General Townsend testified in January that African and European partners “must do more to roll back the VEO threat” in West Africa.³⁵ Last quarter, France announced additional troop deployments to the region.³⁶ This quarter, a French-led European special forces initiative known as Task Force Takuba continued preparation to begin operations by the end of summer 2020, with full mission capability by early 2021.³⁷

Task Force Takuba is an advise-and-accompany force intended to enhance the Malian forces’ capabilities and add security capacity to the Liptako-Gourma border region of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. A French embassy press release said Task Force Takuba will fall under the control of Operation Barkhane.³⁸ Sweden’s Minister of Defense told reporters that one of the task force’s priorities is to prevent the spread of terrorism to Europe.³⁹

Task Force Takuba will have a force strength of approximately 500 personnel when it is fully operational.⁴⁰ Around 100 French and Estonian troops initially deployed in July 2020 with soldiers from the Czech Republic, Sweden, and Italy expected to join the task force at later dates, the French Minister of Armed Forces told reporters.⁴¹ Germany declined to join Task Force Takuba, according to media reporting.⁴² USAFRICOM said the United States was not asked to provide personnel to Task Force Takuba, noting that it is a European initiative.⁴³

Chadian Operation Weakens Boko Haram

In addition to France’s successful operations during this quarter against AQIM and ISIS in the Greater Sahara, Chad announced in April it had completed “Operation Wrath of Boma,” which USAFRICOM described as the most significant security event this quarter in that country. The Chadian military said the large-scale counterterrorism operation killed a sizable number of Boko Haram militants. The operation was executed in response to a late March attack led by Boko Haram that killed 92 Chadian troops, USAFRICOM said, citing media reporting.⁴⁴

USAFRICOM reported that military officials from Chad and Nigeria separately claimed the operation killed a large number of terrorists, and that a UN official stated that the Chadian operation had weakened Boko Haram. According to a USAFRICOM estimate, Boko Haram had 1,500 fighters in the Lake Chad region through the end of the quarter.⁴⁵ The number of Boko Haram fighters, their tactics, and capabilities, as reported by USAFRICOM, have not changed in the previous 2 quarters.

DoS OIG and DoD OIG: Poor Planning Undermined Security Assistance in West Africa

The DoS and DoD OIGs recently released three reports that identified administrative deficiencies in the planning and execution of security assistance programs in West Africa. The reports were issued as the DoS began an annual interagency process to nominate and prioritize security assistance programs in Africa for FY 2021 Peacekeeping Operations funding, one of several DoS and DoD security assistance funding authorities implemented collaboratively by DoS, DoD, and the interagency teams at U.S. embassies in Africa.⁴⁶

In April, the DoS OIG issued a preliminary audit of contracts under the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership, which found that deficient contract specifications—due in part to insufficient subject matter expertise of the DoS officials who oversee the contracts—resulted in \$14.6 million wasted. The report found that a DoS contract for training and equipping Cameroonian and Chadian military forces on Lake Chad did not specify the correct requirements for the boats that the DoS contracted to provide to the Cameroonian navy. As a result, the contractor purchased boats that were not appropriate for the project and were never used for their intended purpose, resulting in \$10.2 million of wasted funds.⁴⁷ A second contract for construction of a barrier wall at a base in Cameroon that houses a Rapid Intervention Battalion did not require the contractor to conduct a site survey prior to submitting its proposal. This contributed, in part, to a collapse of the wall after a large rainfall. The DoS had to expend an additional \$3.3 million for site modifications and wall repairs.⁴⁸

A DoD OIG evaluation released on March 31, identified critical deficiencies in the construction of Air Base 201, the joint U.S.-Nigerien Air Force Base in Agadez, Niger. USAFRICOM uses Air Base 201 to support ISR missions in West Africa.⁴⁹ The DoD OIG evaluation found that USAFRICOM and the U.S. Air Force did not effectively plan for or construct portions of the air base built by the U.S. military, causing construction to be delayed by almost 3 years.⁵⁰ In its report, the DoS OIG found that a DoS contract to construct a C-130 hangar at Air Base 201 did not include necessary construction specifications. As a result, the apron—which is the area where aircraft load, unload, refuel, and park—was built too small, and the hangar’s electrical system was not compatible with U.S.-provided aircraft maintenance equipment. The DoS had to expend an additional \$1.1 million to increase the apron’s size and modify the electrical system, among other expenses.⁵¹

In addition, a DoS OIG report issued during the quarter found that the Bureau of African Affairs—the office that oversees more than \$275 million in assistance programs in Africa—needs to improve its processes for awarding these funds. For example, the use of insufficient processes to extend foreign assistance funds resulted in more than \$14 million being returned to the Department of the Treasury from FY 2017 through FY 2019, including funds that could have been used for other projects.⁵² The report also identified some improvements at the Bureau, including that it had increased senior leadership attention on foreign assistance programs and that it had updated its risk assessments for terrorist financing risk and for federal assistance rewards. For further details on these reports, see pp. 62-66.

DIPLOMACY AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The DoS Denounces Human Rights Abuses by Security Forces

Human rights organizations continued to document alleged human rights violations by security forces in West Africa during the quarter. In June, Amnesty International released a report that accused security forces in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger of committing widespread abuses against civilians in their respective countries, which included the murder and disappearance of 199 people between February and April.⁵³ In addition, Human Rights Watch reported that between November 2019 and June 2020, the bodies of 180 men were discovered in common graves around the northern Burkina Faso city of Djibo. The majority of the victims had been executed by government security forces, according to witnesses interviewed by Human Rights Watch.⁵⁴ Further human rights abuses, including murder and torture, by local and national forces were documented in Cameroon and Nigeria during the quarter.⁵⁵ The prevalence of vigilante groups, that are backed by various government entities complicates the issue of protecting human rights throughout West Africa, where weak state governments are overwhelmed by growing violence.⁵⁶

The Leahy Law prohibits the U.S. Government from providing financial and military assistance to units of foreign security forces that grossly violate human rights.⁵⁷ The U.S. Government continued to provide security assistance to G-5 Sahel countries during the quarter, but increasing allegations of human rights abuses led to stronger statements from embassies in the region, DoS leaders in Washington, and members of Congress. Shortly after the quarter ended, the DoS released a press statement expressing its deep concerns over “the growing number of allegations of human rights violations and abuses perpetrated by state security forces in the Sahel,” including those documented by Human Rights Watch and violations previously reported by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).⁵⁸

The DoS noted in its statement that continued human rights violations and other abuses “risk undermining the state’s credibility with its citizens, serve as a recruiting tool for terrorists, exacerbate the existing humanitarian crisis, and undermine efforts to bring security and stability to the region.”⁵⁹ Further, the DoS warned that U.S. Government assistance to the Sahel region must not be used in any way that contributes to violations or abuses of human rights and, without prompt and thorough action to address these allegations, U.S. security assistance may be at risk.⁶⁰

The DoS Continues to Engage Partners to Combat Rising Violence in the Sahel

During the quarter, the DoS focused on deepening international coordination with European and regional partners in the Sahel.⁶¹ The DoS reported that its Special Envoy for the Sahel Region, Dr. Peter Pham, sought to align U.S. programs with the Sahel Coalition and its component organizations focused on development, security cooperation, and military operations. The Deputy Secretary of State, Stephen Biegun, attended the Sahel Coalition Ministerial on June 12 to demonstrate high-level U.S. support for the coalition’s goals.⁶²

In addition, the DoS continued to encourage the Malian government and separatist groups to make tangible progress on the Algiers Accord for northern Mali.⁶³ During the quarter, the

DoS engaged in discussions regarding the renewal of the MINUSMA mandate. MINUSMA was established by the UN Security Council in April 2013 to support political processes in Mali and carry out a number of security-related tasks. This quarter, the DoS reported that it successfully secured language in the new, still-draft mandate on improved benchmarks for central Mali, as well as the publication of a future UN Secretary General's report on the eventual drawdown of MINUSMA.⁶⁴

STABILIZATION AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

USAID Allocates Nearly \$67 Million in Emergency COVID-19 Funding to West Africa

While cases of COVID-19 continued to spread in West Africa this quarter, the reported numbers of infections and fatalities was lower than other regions in Africa, according to WHO data.⁶⁵ (See Figure 7.) Analysts noted that the region's younger demographic and its recent experience combating the infectious Ebola outbreak from 2014 to 2016, which resulted in the establishment of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, could mitigate the impact of COVID-19 in the region.⁶⁶

Though reported cases and deaths were lower in West Africa compared to "hot spots" like South Africa and Egypt, COVID-19 continued to have destabilizing effects in the region, according to the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel.⁶⁷ Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali have experienced some of the highest COVID-19 related case fatality rates in Africa.⁶⁸

Figure 7.

COVID-19 Cases in West Africa, as of June 30, 2020



	BURKINA FASO	CAMEROON	CHAD	MALI	NIGER	NIGERIA
Total cases	962	12,592	866	2,181	1,075	25,694
Total deaths	53	313	74	116	67	590



Source: World Health Organization, "COVID-19 Situation Update for the WHO Africa Region," 7/1/2020.

Table 3.

USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance COVID-19 West Africa Budget as of June 30, 2020

Country	Planned Funding	Obligated Funding
Burkina Faso	\$9,000,000	\$7,687,852
Cameroon	\$10,000,000	\$7,803,337
Chad	\$2,000,000	\$0
Mali	\$6,700,000	\$807,300
Niger	\$5,000,000	\$699,593
Nigeria	\$34,000,000	\$17,220,000
Total	\$66,700,000	\$34,218,082

Source: USAID BHA

In March, Congress appropriated more than \$1 billion in emergency COVID-19 funding to USAID.⁶⁹ USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) reported that as of June 30, \$66.7 million was planned for the Lake Chad region and Central Sahel countries.⁷⁰ (See Table 3.) Of this amount, approximately \$34 million had been obligated. BHA reported that it expected to have all West African COVID-19 supplemental funding obligated by an internal USAID deadline of July 31.⁷¹ USAID's COVID-19 Task Force reported that BHA, on average, was obligating COVID-19 supplemental funding within 37 days of proposal receipt, approximately 40 percent faster than standard obligation timelines.⁷²

Administrative Hurdles Slow USAID COVID-19 Response

As USAID mobilized to respond to the growing COVID crisis, it faced several administrative hurdles, which undermined the responsiveness of USAID's COVID-19 programing.⁷³

FUNDING

USAID's COVID-19 budget preparation and activity planning required additional layers of approval beyond the established approval process for typical programming. Unlike USAID's typical budget approval process, where programming is approved at the agency level, the White House COVID-19 Task Force had final approval authority over early tranches of USAID's COVID-19 programming. Later, the COVID-19 Task Force and USAID Front Office retained approval authority over COVID-19 humanitarian assistance funding. The additional layer of approvals resulted in increased uncertainty about budget priorities, a disjointed planning process, and delayed COVID-19 programming.⁷⁴

From March to the beginning of May, BHA formulated and reformulated several budget tranches to meet the shifting expectations of the White House and USAID Task Forces, as well as the DoS. BHA's West Africa team reported that "the multiple tranches with delayed

approvals significantly disrupted BHA's ability to quickly plan with partners and consider applications for funding.⁷⁵ In contrast to standard procedures for funding announcements, USAID announced COVID-19 funding amounts before awards were fully designed, giving the appearance that activities were already ongoing.⁷⁶ In some cases, USAID announced the funding before it was approved by the USAID Administrator. This limited the BHA West Africa team's ability to plan needs-based programming, requiring them to request further proposal revisions.⁷⁷

USAID's COVID-19 Task Force reported that the additional approval processes may have contributed to a perception that resources were slow to reach implementing organizations on the ground. The USAID COVID-19 Task Force said the additional layers were needed to ensure the effective use of COVID-related funding.⁷⁸

STAFFING

Once funding was in place, USAID implemented COVID-19 programs amid reduced staffing across the region. BHA reported that slightly over half of its U.S. citizen staff in West Africa chose to temporarily depart their posts under the DoS COVID-19 global authorized departure order.⁷⁹ BHA reported that implementation of COVID-19-related humanitarian assistance was not significantly delayed due to staff departures because USAID staff were able to continue to manage and coordinate using virtual platforms. Additionally, USAID reported that locally hired staff continued to work virtually and to support program implementation during the pandemic.⁸⁰

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

BHA reported that it received inconsistent guidance from the White House COVID-19 Task Force on how their implementers were supposed to acquire PPE.⁸¹ BHA said that nearly a full quarter passed before USAID staff and implementers received clear guidance related to the procurement of PPE, in some cases delaying COVID-19-related programming.⁸²

In March, several USAID bureaus advised their implementers to stop procuring PPE. In April, the Federal Emergency Management Agency released a temporary regulation, restricting the export of specific PPE. Subsequently, there were several more, often contradictory, regulations and exemptions that made it difficult for both USAID staff and implementers to understand whether they could legally procure PPE under either COVID-19 supplemental awards or pre-existing awards, and if so, which types of PPE were allowed and from what sources.⁸³

BHA struggled to plan appropriate COVID-19 response activities in the region due to restrictions related to necessary PPE. Supporting any activities without the ability to protect partner staff and beneficiaries could violate the "do no harm" principle of humanitarian assistance, BHA said. USAID and partner staff hesitated to plan activities without confirmation that PPE could be procured. It was also difficult to estimate program budgets without knowing whether USAID funds could be used to procure PPE.⁸⁴

It was not until June 9 that USAID released clear guidance to agency staff and external implementers that would ultimately allow implementers to acquire most forms of PPE without additional layers of approval.⁸⁵ Across the Sahel and Lake Chad region, this lack of guidance delayed BHA and implementers' ability to finalize program applications as they tried to secure alternative sources of PPE or, in a few cases, adjust applications to only include activities that would not require PPE.⁸⁶

BRANDING AND MARKING

BHA reported that it received delayed and inconsistent guidance about how to properly apply USAID branding within COVID-19 award activities in West Africa, causing confusion for implementers and USAID staff. BHA reported that some implementers were hesitant to pursue additional COVID-19 related funding because it was unclear whether BHA's existing branding and marking waiver for programs in high-risk locations in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin could be applied to COVID-19 response programs. BHA only received partial branding and marking waivers at the end of April for COVID-19 activities for Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria, more than a month after internal discussions began. From March to the end of April, USAID staff and implementers waited on a decision from USAID leadership related to branding and marking; this delay impeded the planning and implementation of COVID-19 programming.⁸⁷

USAID Provides Additional Food Assistance in Cameroon in Response to COVID-19

BHA reported that COVID-19-related programming in Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria emphasized dissemination of reliable COVID-19 preventive practices, provision of additional emergency food assistance as a result of increased food insecurity, and improvement of water, health, and sanitation conditions to enhance hygienic living conditions for residents and IDPs.⁸⁸

For example, USAID reported that BHA's implementers in Cameroon provided food assistance to 76,700 people, some in conflict-affected areas, who experienced acute food insecurity due to COVID-19. BHA also continued to support Cameroonians in urban areas, where COVID-19 travel restrictions and reduced household purchasing power were most acute, and will continue providing direct assistance for the next 6 months. To prevent and control COVID-19, BHA implementers provided training to local healthcare workers and community leaders and disseminated COVID-19 related messaging using radio programming.⁸⁹

OTI Enhances COVID-19 Response in Northeast Nigeria

Travel restrictions imposed by Nigerian government forces and harassment of healthcare workers undermined the COVID-19 response in Nigeria during the quarter, particularly in the country's northeastern states. FEWSNET reported that travel restrictions led to greater food and physical insecurity in northeastern Nigeria.⁹⁰ International media reported that Nigerian military harassment and arrests have increased sharply since the onset of COVID-19, and sustained harassment of frontline healthcare workers may weaken an already fragile response.⁹¹

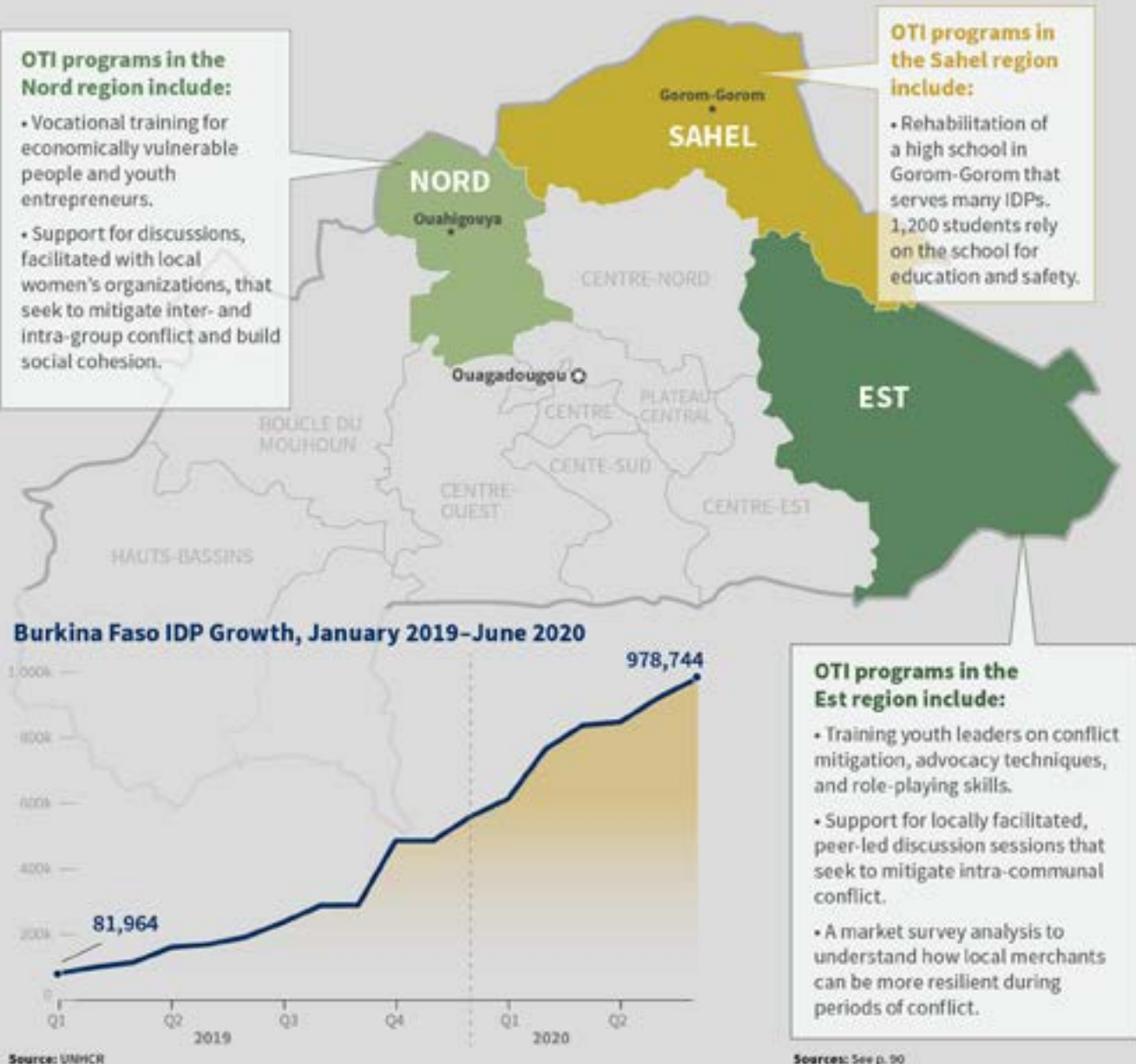
USAID REFOCUSES PROGRAMMING IN BURKINA FASO

Burkina Faso faces multiple, interrelated crises that make the country vulnerable to destabilization, including growing food insecurity, increasing levels of internal displacement, worsening physical security, and the spread of COVID-19.

By June, 2.1 million people (10 percent of the population) were projected to be food insecure, representing a threefold increase since 2019. Additionally, since 2015,

increased violence has left more than 300,000 Burkinabe children without access to education. Reduced income and job losses as a result of COVID-19 have reduced the purchasing power of poor households.

In response, USAID OTI refocused its programming in Burkina Faso, including programs in the Nord, Est, and Sahel regions that seek to strengthen communities' resilience democratic institutions.



In response to the deepening crisis in Nigeria, USAID's OTI began using its ongoing Nigeria Lake Chad Basin program (NLCB) to rapidly provide COVID-19-related programming in the Nigerian states of Yobe, Adamawa, and Borno.⁹² In these northeastern states, the NLCB program initiated five COVID-19 awareness campaigns in the three states, trained community leaders and volunteers in COVID-19 related prevention measures, and ultimately reached 290,767 individuals in 47,054 households.⁹³ The NLCB program also leveraged its existing network, including a war widow vocational training program, to shift its training and manufacturing to produce face masks. By June, 54,000 facemasks had been sewn and distributed by the local government, with an additional 50,000 being sewn for the Nigerian Police Force command in Borno state. The WHO, Borno state government, and Norwegian Refugee Council have since expressed interest in procuring face coverings directly from the women, according to USAID.⁹⁴

USAID Supports Malian Elections, Including COVID-19 Precautions at Polling Stations

Despite ongoing violence and the COVID-19 pandemic, Mali held legislative elections on March 29 and April 19. USAID supported the elections through the Empowering Malians through Election, Reform and Governance Efforts (EMERGE) project, a \$16.2 million, 6-year collaborative project with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation that seeks to advance peace, reconciliation, and more accountable governance through credible and inclusive national elections.⁹⁵

The EMERGE project provided coaching sessions to female legislative candidates and tailored one-on-one advisory sessions during which candidates received targeted campaign and communications guidance. In the 2020 legislative elections, 41 women were elected to the Malian Parliament, up from just 14 in the previous 2013 election.⁹⁶

In preparation for the April elections, the EMERGE project partnered with the Malian government to promote COVID-19 precautionary measures. OTI said that these measures, which were coordinated with the Malian Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Territorial Administration, included COVID-19-related messages for television and radio spots in 14 national languages. The EMERGE project established handwashing stations at polling stations and partnered with 107 volunteers across five regions of Mali to promote the importance of handwashing prior to entering polling places. The EMERGE project also deployed nearly 1,500 trained and accredited election observers and gave them election monitoring worksheets that included questions on COVID-19 compliance measures at polling stations.⁹⁷





Personal protective equipment arrives in Kakuma, Kenya, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. (WFP/ George Ngari photo)

OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

Strategic Planning	58
Audit, Inspection, and Evaluation Activity	60
Investigations and Hotline Activity.....	74

OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

This section of the report provides information on Lead IG and partner agencies' strategic planning efforts; completed, ongoing, and planned Lead IG and partner agencies' oversight work related to audits, inspections, and evaluations; Lead IG investigations; and hotline activities from April 1 through June 30, 2020.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Pursuant to Section 8L of the Inspector General Act, the Lead IG develops and implements a joint strategic plan to guide comprehensive oversight of programs and operations for each overseas contingency operation. This effort includes reviewing and analyzing completed oversight, management, and other relevant reports to identify systemic problems, trends, lessons learned, and best practices to inform future oversight projects. The Lead IG agencies issue an annual joint strategic plan for each operation.

FY 2020 Joint Strategic Oversight Plan Activities

The Inspectors General for the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of State (DoS), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) are required by the Inspector General Act to conduct comprehensive independent oversight of programs and operations in support of designated overseas contingency operations. The law also requires the development of joint strategic plans to conduct comprehensive oversight and quarterly reports on the status of each overseas contingency operation.

The Lead Inspector General Fiscal Year 2020 Comprehensive Oversight Plan for Overseas Contingency Operations classified appendix contains oversight plans for the East Africa and North and West Africa counterterrorism operations. For these operations, the Inspectors General for the DoD, the DoS, and USAID coordinate oversight activities with the U.S. Army Audit Agency, the Naval Audit Service, and the U.S. Air Force Audit Agency (AFAA).

The oversight plan, effective October 1, 2019, organizes oversight projects into three strategic oversight areas: 1) Military Operations and Security Cooperation; 2) Governance, Humanitarian Assistance, and Development; and 3) Support to Mission.



**FY 2020
Comprehensive
Oversight Plan
for Overseas
Contingency
Operations**

Lead IG Strategic Oversight Areas

MILITARY OPERATIONS AND SECURITY COOPERATION

Military Operations and Security Cooperation focuses on determining the degree to which the contingency operation is accomplishing its security mission. Activities that fall under this strategic oversight area include:

- Counterterrorism operations
- Security assistance

GOVERNANCE, HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, AND DEVELOPMENT

Governance, Humanitarian Assistance, and Development focuses on some of the root causes of violent extremism. Activities that fall under this strategic oversight area include:

- Providing food, water, medical care, emergency relief, and shelter to people affected by crisis
- Assisting and protecting internally displaced persons and returning refugees
- Building or enhancing host-nation governance capacity
- Countering and reducing corruption, social inequality, and extremism

SUPPORT TO MISSION

Support to Mission focuses on U.S. administrative, logistical, and management efforts that enable military operations and non-military programs. Activities that fall under this strategic oversight area include:

- Managing government grants and contracts supporting the logistical needs of U.S. Government installations, building and repairing U.S. Government facilities and infrastructure, and maintaining U.S. Government equipment and property
- Improving the cost, schedule, and performance expectations for major acquisition programs
- Ensuring applicable contracts and grant programs achieve intended objectives and policy goals
- Managing financial resources
- Managing financial agreements with host nations
- Ensuring use of OCO funding complies with laws and regulations
- Administering U.S. Government programs
- Providing for the occupational health and safety of personnel
- Countering trafficking in persons
- Ensuring the security of U.S. personnel and property
- Mobilizing staff and resources

AUDIT, INSPECTION, AND EVALUATION ACTIVITY

The COVID-19 global pandemic continued to affect the Lead IG agencies' ability to conduct oversight on projects related to overseas contingency operations. Due to the evacuation of many deployed staff and country-imposed travel restrictions, some oversight projects by Lead IG agencies have been delayed or deferred. For some projects, the scope of the work has been revised or narrowed. The Lead IG agencies reported that their personnel were able to conduct some work while teleworking and practicing social distancing.

Despite these restrictions and limitations, the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies completed 16 reports related to the East Africa Counterterrorism Operation and the North and West Africa Counterterrorism Operation during the quarter. These reports examined various activities that support the East Africa Counterterrorism Operation and the North and West Africa Counterterrorism Operation, including: DoD oversight of training to mobile medical teams prior to deploying to U.S. Africa Command area of operations; the DoS Bureau of Counterterrorism's oversight and management of its foreign assistance programs, the DoS Global Engagement Center's management and monitoring of its Federal assistance awards, and financial accountability in humanitarian assistance programs. The AFAA also reported on whether the Air Force provided equipment and training to security force personnel needed to perform mission requirements while deployed in Niger.

As of June 30, 22 projects related to the East Africa and North and West Africa counterterrorism operations were ongoing and 5 projects were planned.

Final Reports by Lead IG Agencies

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Audit of Readiness of Mobile Medical Teams Supporting Contingency Operations in the U.S. Africa Command and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Areas of Responsibility

DODIG-2020-087; June 8, 2020

The DoD OIG conducted this audit to determine whether the Defense Health Agency and the Military Departments provided effective training to mobile medical teams to improve trauma care before teams deployed to the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and U.S. Africa Command (which includes the areas that support the East Africa and North and West Africa counterterrorism operations) areas of responsibility.

The Army, Navy, and Air Force employ mobile medical teams in response to combatant commander requests for forces on military operations. Mobile medical teams typically consist of a general surgeon, an emergency physician, a critical care nurse, a surgical technician, and additional trauma care professionals. Mobile medical teams need to develop both medical skills to perform operations in unforgiving environments and tactical skills to function safely in a combat zone.

The DoD OIG determined that the mobile medical teams were provided team, environmental, and equipment training before they deployed to the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and U.S. Africa Command areas of responsibility, and the team members



U.S. Army soldiers drag a downed teammate during a simulation that was part of a combat lifesaver course at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti. (U.S. Air Force)

reported that the training was generally effective. However, the DoD OIG determined that improvements are needed regarding surgical and tactical training to better prepare mobile medical teams before deployment.

The DoD OIG recommended that the Surgeons General of the Army, Navy, and Air Force issue guidance implementing standardized training programs for all mobile medical teams, update training curriculums to include tactical training of mobile medical teams, and require all mobile medical team personnel complete standardized post-deployment after action reports and submit them to the Joint Lessons Learned Information System. The DoD OIG also recommended that a standardized post-deployment after action report template be developed to gather information on the effectiveness of training provided to mobile medical team members.

Management agreed with the recommendations.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Inspection of U.S. Mission to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva, Switzerland

ISP-I-20-16; June 12, 2020

The DoS OIG inspected the executive direction, program and policy implementation, resource management, and information management operations of the U.S. Mission to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva, Switzerland (Mission Geneva). Geneva is home to more than 100 UN and international organizations. The U.S. Government engages with these multilateral institutions through Mission Geneva. Among the international organizations based in Geneva are several—including the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Organization for Migration, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees—through which the U.S. Government directs substantial portions of its humanitarian assistance funding for migrants, refugees, and others affected by conflicts in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

Among other things, the DoS OIG found that the Charge d’Affaires and the Acting Deputy Chief of Mission led Mission Geneva in a professional and collegial manner; Mission Geneva and the DoS Bureau of International Organization Affairs did not have shared procedures for promoting and tracking U.S. citizen employment at Geneva-based UN and other international organizations; Mission Geneva had deficiencies in its procurement program, including unauthorized commitments and poor contract administration; and while Mission Geneva’s Information Management Office met customer needs, the Mission did not always carry out information security responsibilities, putting the DoS’s information systems at risk of compromise.

The DoS OIG made 20 recommendations—18 to Mission Geneva, 1 to the DoS Bureau of International Organization Affairs, and 1 to the DoS Bureau of Global Talent Management—to address the shortcomings identified in the report. Management agreed with the recommendations.

The DoS OIG also completed a classified annex to this report after the quarter ended, which was distributed to authorized recipients.

Inspection of the Bureau of Counterterrorism’s Foreign Assistance Program Management

ISP-I-20-14; June 1, 2020

This report was among three issued based on an inspection of the DoS Bureau of Counterterrorism (CT Bureau), which is discussed below (Inspection of the Bureau of Counterterrorism; ISP-I-20-13).

During the inspection of the CT Bureau, the DoS OIG inspected CT Bureau’s management of its foreign assistance program. The CT Bureau leads DoS efforts on international counterterrorism strategy, policy, and operations. The CT Bureau advances its efforts, in part, through its foreign assistance programs, which also aim to strengthen partner countries’ capabilities to help achieve U.S. counterterrorism policy goals and objectives. The CT

Bureau managed more than \$384 million in foreign assistance funds during FY 2018. Among the interagency agreements and Federal assistance awards the DoS OIG reviewed were nearly \$6.6 million for counterterrorism programs in Kenya awarded to the U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Institute of Peace.

The DoS OIG determined that the CT Bureau's monitoring and evaluation framework did not fully comply with DoS standards because the CT Bureau had yet to develop performance management plans for 13 of its 15 major programs; the CT Bureau relied on third-party contractors to help with foreign assistance program oversight, and these contractors inappropriately performed inherently governmental functions in some instances; the CT Bureau's Federal assistance award files did not always include documentation to show whether a recipient performed the award in accordance with the statement of work; and the CT Bureau returned \$51.9 million in expired and canceled funds from FYs 2016 to 2019, partly as a result of weaknesses in its oversight and management of foreign assistance awards.

The DoS OIG made seven recommendations to the CT Bureau to resolve the management weaknesses and gaps identified in the report. Management agreed with the recommendations.

The third report associated with this inspection was a classified annex distributed to authorized recipients on May 4, 2020.

Inspection of the Bureau of Counterterrorism

ISP-I-20-13; May 7, 2020

The DoS OIG inspected the DoS CT Bureau's executive direction, policy and program management, administrative operations, and information management and information security activities. The CT Bureau leads the DoS's efforts on international counterterrorism strategy, policy, and operations. The CT Bureau is responsible for a complex set of policies and programs ranging from international information sharing to foreign assistance programs. The CT Bureau's policy mandate includes areas such as terrorist detention and repatriation, countering violent extremism, and management of aspects of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS.

This report is a companion report to the DoS OIG Inspection of the Bureau of Counterterrorism's Foreign Assistance Program Management (ISP-I20-14, discussed above). The DoS OIG determined that the CT Bureau established effective internal policy coordination and communication processes; the head of the CT Bureau spearheaded interagency efforts to increase the pace and number of terrorist designations in 2018, which resulted in more than 50 designation packages being completed; employees from other DoS bureaus and Federal agencies expressed differing opinions about the CT Bureau's effectiveness in promoting its policy goals in interagency processes; the CT Bureau did not provide sufficient policy guidance, training, and administrative support to overseas employees who are responsible for coordinating and reporting on regional counterterrorism issues; and the CT Bureau's statutorily mandated annual Country Reports on Terrorism—the CT Bureau's flagship product, on which Congress, the media, and the public rely as an authoritative statement of terrorist incidents worldwide—were submitted late in seven of eight instances reviewed during the inspection.

The DoS OIG made 11 recommendations to the CT Bureau to address the deficiencies identified in the report. Management agreed with the recommendation.

Inspection of Embassy Yaoundé, Cameroon

ISP-I-20-20, May 19, 2020

The DoS OIG inspected the executive direction, program and policy implementation, resource management, and information management operations of the U.S. Embassy in Yaoundé, and an embassy branch office in Douala.

Among other things, the DoS OIG found that the Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission led the embassy in a professional manner, but the Deputy Chief of Mission did not efficiently manage and prioritize items coming to her for review and approval, which created delays in the approval process; the embassy did not develop a plan to integrate the branch office in Douala with embassy operations, as called for in the embassy's Integrated Country Strategy; the embassy issued 13 visas in a particular category to applicants who were ineligible because their medical results were incomplete; the embassy's residential housing program did not fully comply with DoS safety and fire standards; and the embassy did not have a functioning radio network, leaving it unable to communicate with posts assigned to its regional network control station.

The DoS OIG made 13 recommendations, 12 to the U.S. Embassy in Yaoundé, and 1 to the DoS Bureau of Global Talent Management, to address the shortcomings identified in the report. Management agreed with the recommendations.

For this inspection, the DoS OIG also produced a classified annex which was distributed to authorized recipients on May 15, 2020.

Compliance Follow-Up Review: Bureau of African Affairs' Foreign Assistance Program Management

ISP-C-20-23, May 14, 2020

The DoS OIG conducted a compliance follow-up review of the DoS's implementation of recommendations issued in a 2017 DoS OIG inspection report. That 2017 report identified deficiencies associated with the Bureau of African Affairs' (African Affairs) strategic oversight of foreign assistance program and shortcomings related to program management, risk management, funds management, and administration of Federal assistance awards. African Affairs' foreign assistance awards totaled to more than \$275 million in FY 2019.

During the follow-up review, the DoS OIG found that African Affairs took action to improve its management of foreign assistance programs, but some deficiencies identified in the 2017 inspection report had not been fully addressed. The DoS OIG noted that African Affairs had conducted biannual strategic foreign assistance reviews; increased senior leadership attention on foreign assistance programs; and updated its risk assessments for terrorist financing risk and for Federal assistance awards. However, the DoS OIG noted that African Affairs: had not documented its foreign assistance business processes; had not sufficiently improved its process for extending the availability of foreign assistance funds, resulting in more than \$14 million being returned to the Department of the Treasury during FYs 2017-2019;

and had not sufficiently addressed a shortcoming with respect to grant officer representatives completing reports evaluating the performance of recipients of African Affairs foreign assistance grants.

The 2017 inspection report contained 10 recommendations to African Affairs, and this follow-up review reviewed the implementation of 9 of the 10 recommendations. The remaining recommendation addressed a topic that is the subject of an audit that was underway at the time the follow-up review was conducted. Through the follow-up review, the DoS OIG determined that two recommendations from the 2017 report remained closed, that four recommendations would be closed, one recommendation reissued, and one recommendation revised and reissued. Additionally, the DoS OIG closed one recommendation from the 2017 report but issued a new recommendation to address related ongoing issues. Management agreed with the recommendations.

Audit of Global Engagement Center Federal Assistance Award Management and Monitoring

AUD-MERO-20-26; April 22, 2020

The DoS OIG conducted this audit to determine whether Federal assistance awards provided by the DoS Global Engagement Center (GEC) aligned with the GEC's statutory mandate and authority and whether the GEC monitored those awards in accordance with Federal requirements, DoS policies and guidance, and the terms and conditions of each award. The National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2017 mandated that the GEC "lead, synchronize, and coordinate efforts of the U.S. Government to recognize, understand, expose, and counter foreign state and non-state propaganda and disinformation efforts aimed at undermining U.S. national security interests." The GEC counter-disinformation efforts relate to state actors including Russia, China, and Iran, and terrorist groups including ISIS and al-Qaeda and their affiliates in Africa and elsewhere.

The DoS OIG reviewed all 39 grants and cooperative agreements that the GEC awarded in FY 2018 and found that the stated purpose of 38 of 39 awards aligned with the GEC's statutory mandate and authority. However, the DoS OIG selected 10 of the 39 awards for detailed testing and found that the GEC did not consistently manage and monitor those awards in accordance with Federal requirements, DoS policies and guidance, and award terms and conditions. Specifically, the DoS OIG found that GEC officials did not always clearly designate roles and responsibilities for grants management personnel; 3 of 10 risk assessments for the selected awards contained errors; and 9 of 10 monitoring and evaluation plans for the selected awards did not include all required elements and did not demonstrate a direct link to the award's scope of work. Moreover, the DoS OIG found that GEC officials did not review award recipients' performance reports. The DoS OIG determined that these deficiencies occurred, in part, because the GEC did not have enough experienced personnel to issue, manage, and monitor cooperative agreements when the FY 2018 awards were issued, and the GEC had not formally adopted internal policies, processes, and procedures for managing and monitoring Federal assistance awards.

The DoS OIG made five recommendations to the GEC that were intended to improve the GEC's administration of Federal assistance awards. Management agreed with the recommendations.

Management Assistance Report: The Bureau of African Affairs Should Improve Performance Work Statements and Increase Subject Matter Expertise for Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership Projects

AUD-MERO-20-29, April 22, 2020

During an ongoing audit of the DoS Bureau of African Affairs’ monitoring and coordination of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership, the DoS OIG identified deficiencies with the performance work statements developed for contracts for three Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership projects. DoS guidelines require that performance work statements “describe results in clear, specific, and objective terms with measurable outcomes.”

However, the DoS OIG found that the performance work statements for the three projects reviewed were neither clear nor specific. For example, one project in Cameroon called for the construction of a barrier wall but the performance work statement did not require the contractor to conduct a site survey prior to submitting a proposal which led, in part, to a section of the wall collapsing as a result of excessive rain, and which then led the Bureau of African Affairs to spend an additional \$3.3 million for modifications and repairs. For a second project in Cameroon, a contract called for training and equipping military forces at Lake Chad but because the performance work statement did not include accurate requirements, the contractor provided boats that were not appropriate for the project. As a result, the boats were never used for their intended purpose and \$10.2 million was wasted. In another example, a contract called for the construction of an aircraft hangar in Niger but the performance work statement did not clearly state the dimensions of the apron. The apron was built too small and the Bureau of African Affairs spent an additional \$1.1 million, in part, to increase the apron’s size. Because of the shortcomings identified for these three projects, the DoS OIG questioned a total of \$14.6 million expended by the DoS under the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership.

The DoS OIG determined that these deficiencies occurred, in part, because the contracting officer’s representatives and the contractors the Bureau of African Affairs employs in support of its programs did not have the technical knowledge needed to develop well-defined performance work statements. The DoS OIG made seven recommendations to the Bureau of African Affairs to address the shortcomings identified. Management agreed with the recommendations.

U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Financial Audit of USAID Resources Managed by Norwegian Refugee Council in Multiple Countries Under Multiple Awards, January 1 to December 31, 2018

4-000-20-084-R, June 26, 2020

The Norwegian Refugee Council is a NGO humanitarian organization that works with refugees and internally displaced people in Africa and other locations.

The Norwegian Refugee Council contracted with an independent audit firm to conduct an annual audit of its systems in line with USAID award requirements, and USAID OIG reviewed the report for conformance with professional standards.

Auditors examined approximately \$37 million in expenditures of which approximately \$25 million related to USAID funds during the audited period. The audit firm concluded the fund accountability statement presented fairly, in all material respects, program revenues and costs incurred under the awards for the period audited. The audit firm reported no questioned costs; no material weaknesses in internal control; and no instances of material noncompliance. The audit firm also issued a management letter with other areas of concern findings, included in the report.

USAID Needs To Improve Policy and Processes to Better Protect Information Accessed on Personal Devices

A-000-20-006-P; June 19, 2020

USAID OIG conducted this audit to determine whether USAID implemented key internal controls to protect information available in the external cloud when accessed through staff's personal devices. The internal controls under review are based on controls recommended by the National Institute of Standards and Technology, Digital Services Advisory Group, and the Federal Chief Information Officers Council.

USAID staff—including those serving at embassies in countries supporting the East Africa and North and West Africa counterterrorism operations—rely on both the agency's internal computing systems and external cloud computing systems to conduct their daily business. USAID OIG found that USAID had implemented some internal controls to address the risk of information security breaches. For instance, USAID required staff to take training on protecting sensitive information and having users sign an agreement of conduct. USAID also required staff to use an agency-issued electronic secure authentication device when accessing the external cloud on personal devices. However, USAID OIG concluded that there were significant gaps in USAID's policies on the use of personal devices, and that these gaps presented an increased risk of security breaches to the external cloud and the information contained within the cloud.

USAID OIG made four recommendations to USAID's Chief Information Officer to address the gaps in internal controls identified in the audit. On the basis of the responses USAID provided, USAID OIG considers three of the recommendations closed, and one of them resolved but open pending completion of planned activities.

Financial Closeout Audit of USAID Resources Managed by African Development Solutions (ADESO) in Somalia Under Multiple Awards, January 1 to December 31, 2018

4-000-20-068-R, May 8, 2020

African Development Solutions is an African-led international development and humanitarian organization established in 1991 in response to Somalia's devastating humanitarian crisis and civil war. African Development Solutions works to improve the conditions of those who are living in marginalized areas in the Horn of Africa.

African Development Solutions contracted with an independent audit firm to conduct an annual audit of its systems in line with USAID award requirements, and USAID OIG reviewed the report for conformance with professional standards.

Auditors examined approximately \$2.8 million in expenditures and concluded the fund accountability statement presented fairly, in all material respects, program revenues and costs incurred under the award for the period audited. The audit firm did not identify any questioned costs; no material weaknesses in internal control; and two instances of material noncompliance. The two instances identified are repeat findings from the prior period. In addition, since this was a closeout audit for all USAID awards to the recipient, the firm did not make a recommendation but suggest that USAID determine if the recipient addressed the issues noted.

Financial Audit of USAID Resources Managed by African Development Solutions (ADESO) in Somalia Under Multiple Awards, January 1 to December 31, 2017

4-000-20-067-R, May 7, 2020

African Development Solutions is an African-led international development and humanitarian organization established in 1991 in response to Somalia's devastating humanitarian crisis and civil war. African Development Solutions works to improve the conditions of those who are living in marginalized areas in the Horn of Africa.

African Development Solutions contracted with an independent audit firm to conduct an annual audit of its systems in line with USAID award requirements, and USAID OIG reviewed the report for conformance with professional standards.

Auditors examined approximately \$8.5 million in expenditures and concluded the fund accountability statement presented fairly, in all material respects, program revenues and costs incurred under the award for the period audited. The audit firm did not identify any questioned costs; no material weaknesses in internal control; and two instances of material noncompliance. The firm did not make any recommendations.

Financial Audit of USAID Resources Managed by Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI) in Multiple Countries Under Multiple Awards, January 1 to December 31, 2018

4-000-20-062-R, April 23, 2020

Cooperazione Internazionale is an independent Italian NGO that seeks to reduce poverty in Africa and other locations in Latin America and the Middle East.

Cooperazione Internazionale contracted with an independent audit firm to conduct an annual audit of its systems in line with USAID award requirements, and USAID OIG reviewed the report for conformance with professional standards.

Auditors examined approximately \$4 million in expenditures and concluded the fund accountability statement presented fairly, in all material respects, program revenues and costs incurred under the award for the period audited. The audit firm did not identify any questioned costs, no material weaknesses in internal control, and no instances of material noncompliance.

Financial Closeout Audit of USAID Resources Managed by Wajir South Development Association (WASDA) In Multiple Countries Under Multiple Awards, July 14, 2017 to September 30, 2018

4-000-20-060-R, April 22, 2020

The Wajir South Development Association (WASDA) is a Kenyan non-profit organization that addresses development challenges in the region. WASDA's mission is to mobilize and engage communities for sustainable management of the environment, water resources, livelihoods, and education and public health services in the Horn of Africa.

Wajir South Development Association contracted with an independent audit firm to conduct an annual audit of its systems in line with USAID award requirements, and USAID OIG reviewed the report for conformance with professional standards.

Auditors examined approximately \$1.7 million in expenditures and concluded the fund accountability statement presented fairly, in all material respects, program revenues and costs incurred under the award for the period audited. The audit firm identified \$6,512 in ineligible questioned costs; no material weaknesses in internal control; and one instance of material noncompliance.

Financial Audit of USAID Resources Managed by Northern Rangelands Trust in Kenya Under Multiple Awards, January 1 to December 31, 2018

4-615-20-051-R, April 16, 2020

The Northern Rangelands Trust is a community led NGO in northern Kenya that works toward improving people's lives, securing peace, and conserving natural resources.

Northern Rangelands Trust contracted with an independent audit firm to conduct an annual audit of its systems in line with USAID award requirements, and USAID OIG reviewed the report for conformance with professional standards.

Auditors examined approximately \$4.7 million in expenditures and concluded the fund accountability statement presented fairly, in all material respects, program revenues and costs incurred under the award for the period audited, except for \$47,666 in total questioned costs (\$46,676 ineligible and \$990 unsupported); no material weaknesses in internal control; and eight instances of material noncompliance. Two of the material noncompliance findings related to recommendations made in the prior year. The firm recommended that USAID/Kenya and East Africa determine if the recipient addressed the issues noted.

USAID OIG ISSUES ADVISORY TO INFORM USAID'S COVID-19 RESPONSE

On May 21, USAID OIG issued an advisory notice, "Key Questions to Inform USAID's COVID-19 Response." The advisory is based on past USAID OIG work, including the previous Operation United Assistance contingency operations, which was activated for the Ebola virus disease outbreak in West Africa. The advisory highlights lessons learned from past global health and emergency programming and key considerations for USAID's COVID-19 response effort.

FINAL REPORTS BY PARTNER AGENCIES

AIR FORCE AUDIT AGENCY

Security Forces Equipment and Training 435th Air Expeditionary Wing Ramstein Air Base, Germany

F2020-0027-REE000; April 17, 2020

The Air Force Audit Agency (AFAA) conducted this audit to determine the sufficiency of the condition and quantity of security forces' individual protective and deployable equipment and whether security force personnel have received necessary training on equipment needed to perform mission requirements.

The 435th Air Expeditionary Wing security forces personnel provide security and force protection at Air Base 101 and Air Base 201, located respectively in Niamey and Agadez, Niger. Security forces personnel receive, account for, and maintain individual protective and deployable equipment to accomplish the mission. As of November 2019, security forces personnel at Air Base 101 and Air Base 201 managed 556 equipment items valued over \$4.6 million.

The AFAA determined that security forces personnel were trained and equipped to meet mission requirements. Specifically, the quantity and condition of security forces' individual protective and deployable equipment was sufficient, and personnel received training on individual protective and deployable equipment to perform mission requirements. However, security forces personnel did not accurately account for deployable equipment items. Accurately accounting for deployable equipment provides visibility over assets essential to Air Force mission and reduces the potential for loss, theft, or misuse of assets.

The AFAA made four recommendations to improve accountability for deployable equipment. Management agreed with the recommendations.

Ongoing and Planned Oversight Activities

As of June 30, 22 projects related to the East Africa and North and West Africa counterterrorism operations were ongoing, and 5 were planned. Lead IG and partner agencies have suspended or modified the dates of estimated completion for some ongoing oversight projects due to the operational restrictions caused by COVID-19.

Tables 4 through 5 list the title and objective for Lead IG and partner agencies' ongoing oversight projects.

Table 4.

Ongoing Oversight Projects by Lead IG Agency, as of June 30, 2020**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL*****Evaluation of U.S. Special Operations Command Joint Military Information Support Operations Web Operations Center***

To determine whether U.S. Special Operations Command's Joint Military Information Support Operations Web Operations Center provides U.S. combatant commanders the increased capability to conduct Internet-based information operations globally.

Evaluation of Combatant Command Counter Threat Finance Activities in Support of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, U.S. Africa Command, U.S. Central Command, and U.S. European Command Priorities

To determine whether U.S. Africa Command, U.S. Central Command, U.S. European Command, and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command are planning and executing counter threat finance activities to impact adversaries' ability to use financial networks to negatively affect U.S. interests.

* Suspended due to coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19). Project will restart when the DoD OIG resumes normal operations.

Evaluation of the U.S. Africa Command Support to Foreign Partners for Counterterrorism Operations

Classified objective. Contact DoD OIG Evaluations for more information.

* Suspended due to COVID-19. Project will restart when the DoD OIG resumes normal operations.

Evaluation of Al-Dhafra Air Base United Arab Emirates Fueling Facilities

To determine whether the Air Force effectively maintains the fueling facilities located at Al-Dhafra Air Base, United Arab Emirates, to support the U.S. Central Command refueling missions, and that these refueling facilities do not pose health, safety, or environmental risks.

* Suspended due to COVID-19. Project will restart when the DoD OIG resumes normal operations.

Evaluation of Tactical Signals Intelligence Processing

To determine whether Theater Support Activity's tactical signals intelligence processing is sufficient to satisfy priority intelligence requirements.

* Suspended due to COVID-19. Project will restart when the DoD OIG resumes normal operations.

Evaluation of the Combatant Commands' Intelligence Interrogation Approaches and Techniques

To determine whether U.S. Africa Command and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command oversight of intelligence interrogations adheres to applicable DoD policies and regulations, and the overall effect of these policies and regulations on the interrogation process.

* Suspended due to COVID-19. Project will restart when the DoD OIG resumes normal operations.

Evaluation of Kinetic Targeting Processes in the U.S. Africa Command Area of Responsibility

To evaluate U.S. Africa Command's target development and prosecution processes, as well as post-strike collateral damage and civilian casualty assessment activities.

* Suspended due to COVID-19. Project will restart when the DoD OIG resumes normal operations.

Evaluation of U.S. Central Command Kinetic Targeting Processes and Reporting Procedures

To evaluate U.S. Central Command's target development and prosecution processes, as well as post-strike collateral damage and civilian casualty assessment activities.

* Suspended due to COVID-19. Project will restart when the DoD OIG resumes normal operations.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL***Audit of Department of State Foreign Assistance Grants and Cooperative Agreements in Somalia***

To determine the extent to which foreign assistance provided to Somalia is being spent in accordance with regulations and meeting U.S. goals and objectives.

Inspection of the Libya External Office

To evaluate the programs and operations of the Libya External Office.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Audit of Remote Diplomatic Mission Operations

To determine whether the DoS has instituted adequate protocols to inform the decision to establish a remote diplomatic mission; identify and provide resources to support mission-essential functions; guide daily operations; and evaluate and mitigate risks associated with the execution of foreign assistance programs and initiatives that are overseen remotely.

Audit of Department of State's Risk Assessments and Monitoring of Voluntary Contributions to International Organizations

To determine whether DoS policies, processes, and guidance for voluntary contributions ensure that risks are identified, assessed, and responded to before providing funds to public international organizations, and funds are monitored to achieve award objectives.

Inspection of the U.S. Embassy in Ouagadougou

To evaluate the programs and operations of the U.S. Embassy in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

Inspection of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security Special Program for Embassy Augmentation Response

To evaluate the Security Special Program for Embassy Augmentation Response.

Audit of Department of State's Post Security Program Review Process

To determine whether the DoS Bureau of Diplomatic Security's Post Security Program Review process is sufficient to identify and resolve deficiencies in the management of selected posts' life safety, emergency preparedness, and information security programs.

Inspection of U.S. Mission to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva, Switzerland—Classified Annex

To evaluate the programs and operations of the U.S. Mission to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva.

U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Audit of USAID's Initiative Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

To determine the extent to which USAID took action to prevent and detect sexual exploitation and abuse and to assess USAID's process for responding to allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Audit of USAID's Self-Reliance Initiative

To determine to the extent to which USAID's self-reliance metrics have been incorporated into its development programming strategy and the challenges USAID faces in implementing development activities as envisioned under the Journey to Self-Reliance Initiative.

Audit of USAID's Response to the Lake Chad Basin Complex Emergency

To determine the extent to which USAID oversaw its humanitarian assistance activities in the Lake Chad Basin; adopted measures to mitigate the risks associated with implementers using waivers from competition in procurement in the Lake Chad Basin; and adopted and verified that measures to prevent the diversion of aid from its intended beneficiaries are being followed in the Lake Chad Basin.

Audit of USAID's Reliance in the Sahel Enhanced (RISE) Project

To assess to what extent USAID designed and monitored the implementation of RISE I activities to align with its resilience policy goals; and to what extent USAID incorporated lessons learned from RISE I into RISE II.

Audit of USAID's Contract Termination Practices

To assess USAID's procedures guiding acquisition award terminations, and if selected acquisition awards were terminated in accordance with established requirements.

Audit of the USAID Compliance with the Senator Paul Simon Water for the World Act of 2014

To what extent has USAID designated high priority countries and allocated water access, sanitation, and hygiene funding based on the Senator Paul Simon Water for the World Act of 2014.

Table 5.

Planned Oversight Projects by Lead IG Agency, as of June 30, 2020**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL*****Audit of Oversight of the Base Operations Support Services Contract for U.S. Africa Command Bases***

To determine whether Naval Facilities Engineering Command Atlantic is overseeing the U.S. Africa Command Base Operations Support Services contract to ensure the contractor is providing proper support services.

Audit of the African Surface Distribution Services Contract

To determine whether the DoD managed the African Surface Distribution Services contract to ensure ground distribution and transportation performance objectives were met.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL***Inspection of the U.S. Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria, and the Consulate General in Lagos***

To evaluate the programs and operations of the U.S. Embassy in Abuja and the Consulate General in Lagos.

Audit of DoS Implementation of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security

To determine whether the DoS Office of Global Women's Issues has tailored applicable DoS engagements and program to help women be more prepared for, and able to participate in, decision-making processes related to conflict and crisis; established metric and targets to evaluate, measure, and report DoS performance; and created a process to modify or redirect program resources on the basis of performance that informs resource allocation and planning.

Inspection of the U.S. Embassy in Cotonou, Benin

To evaluate the programs and operations of the U.S. Embassy in Cotonou.

INVESTIGATIONS AND HOTLINE ACTIVITY

The Lead IG agencies and partners continue to coordinate their investigative efforts through the Fraud and Corruption Investigative Working Group, which consists of representatives from the Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS, the DoD OIG's investigative and criminal component), the DoS OIG, USAID OIG, the Army Criminal Investigations Command, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, and the Air Force Office of Special Investigations.

However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, DCIS has temporarily removed investigative personnel from Djibouti. DCIS is continually monitoring the health and safety conditions in the U.S. Africa Command area of operation in order to assess the viability of resuming deployments to the continent. DCIS investigators were able to work on cases related to the East Africa Counterterrorism Operation and the North and West Africa Counterterrorism Operation from Kuwait, Germany, and the United States. DoS OIG and USAID OIG investigators based in Frankfurt have been teleworking from their residences.

During this quarter, Lead IG investigative agencies coordinated on 17 open investigations related to the East Africa Counterterrorism Operation and 3 open investigations related to the North and West Africa Counterterrorism Operation. The open investigations involve procurement and grant fraud, corruption, computer intrusion, theft, and human trafficking. This quarter, the Fraud and Corruption Investigative Working Group conducted 1 fraud awareness briefings for 12 participants.

Each Lead IG agency maintains its own hotline to receive complaints and contacts specific to its agency. The hotlines provide a confidential, reliable means for individuals to report violations of law, rule, or regulation; mismanagement; gross waste of funds; or abuse of authority. The DoD OIG has an investigator to coordinate the hotline contacts among the Lead IG agencies and others, as appropriate. This quarter, the investigator did not receive any complaints related to the East Africa Counterterrorism Operation and the North and West Africa Counterterrorism Operation.







Somali women and children wait for COVID-19 relief items in Wadajir, Somalia. (AMISOM photo)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
Classified Appendix to this Report 78

APPENDIX B
Methodology for Preparing this Lead IG
Quarterly Report 78

Acronyms 80

Map of North and West Africa 81

Map of East Africa 82

Endnotes 83

APPENDIX A

Classified Appendix to this Report

This unclassified report normally includes a classified appendix that provides additional information on the East Africa Counterterrorism Operation and the North and West Africa Counterterrorism Operation, as noted in several sections of this report. Due to the coronavirus disease–2019 pandemic, the Lead IG agencies did not prepare a classified appendix this quarter.

APPENDIX B

Methodology for Preparing this Lead IG Quarterly Report

This report complies with sections 2, 4, and 8L of the Inspector General Act of 1978, which requires that the designated Lead Inspector General (IG) provide a quarterly report, available to the public, on an overseas contingency operation. The Chair of the Council of Inspectors General for Integrity and Efficiency designated the Department of Defense (DoD) IG as the Lead IG for the East Africa Counterterrorism Operation and the North and West Africa Counterterrorism Operation. The Department of State (DoS) IG is the Associate Lead IG for the operation.

This report contains information from the three Lead IG agencies—DoD Office of Inspector General (OIG), DoS OIG, and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) OIG—as well as from partner oversight agencies. This report covers the period from April 1, 2020 through June 30, 2020.

To fulfill its congressional mandate to produce a quarterly report the East Africa Counterterrorism Operation and the North and West Africa Counterterrorism Operation, the Lead IG agencies gather data and information from Federal agencies and open sources. The sources of information contained in this report are listed in endnotes or notes to tables and figures. Except in the case of audits, inspections, and evaluations referenced in this report, the Lead IG agencies have not verified or audited the information collected through open-source research or requests for information to Federal agencies.

INFORMATION COLLECTION

Each quarter, the Lead IG agencies gather information from the DoD, DoS, USAID, and other Federal agencies about their programs and operations related to the East Africa Counterterrorism Operation and the North and West Africa Counterterrorism Operation. The Lead IG agencies use the information provided by their respective agencies for quarterly reporting and oversight planning.

OPEN-SOURCE RESEARCH

This report also draws on the most current, publicly available information from reputable sources. Sources used in this report include the following:

- Congressional testimony
- Press conferences, official U.S. Government briefings
- United Nations reports
- Reports issued by nongovernmental organizations and think tanks
- Media reports

Materials collected through open-source research provide information to describe the status of the operation and help the Lead IG agencies assess information provided in their agency information collection process.

REPORT PRODUCTION

The DoD OIG, as the Lead IG, is responsible for assembling and producing this report. The DoD OIG, DoS OIG, and USAID OIG draft the sections of the report related to the activities of their agencies. The Lead IG agencies then provide those offices that provided information with opportunities to verify and comment on the content of the report.

Each OIG coordinates the review process with its own agency. During the first review, the Lead IG agencies ask their agencies to correct inaccuracies and provide additional documentation. The Lead IG agencies incorporate agency comments, where appropriate, and send the report back to the agencies for a second review. Each Lead IG agency participates in reviewing and editing the entire quarterly report.

ACRONYMS

Acronym	
ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Database
ADESO	African Development Solutions
AFAA	Air Force Audit Agency
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
AQIM	al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
BHA	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
COVID-19	coronavirus disease–2019
DCIS	Defense Criminal Investigative Service
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
DoD	Department of Defense
DoS	Department of State
EMERGE	Empowering Malians through Election, Reform and Governance Efforts
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FEWSNET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
GEC	Global Engagement Center
GNA	Government of National Accord
IED	improvised explosive device
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
JNIM	Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimin
LEO	Libya External Office

Acronym	
LNA	Libyan National Army
LOE	line of effort
MCC	Military Coordination Cell
MINUSMA	Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NLCB	Nigeria Lake Chad Basin program
OCO	overseas contingency operation
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives
PPE	personal protective equipment
SFAB	Security Force Assistance Brigade
SNA	Somali National Army
SOCAFRICA	Special Operations Command-Africa
UN	United Nations
UNSMIL	United Nations Support Mission in Libya
USAFRICOM	United States Africa Command
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VBIED	vehicle-borne IED
VEO	violent extremist organization
WASDA	Wajir South Development Association
WHO	World Health Organization





ENDNOTES

Executive Summary

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