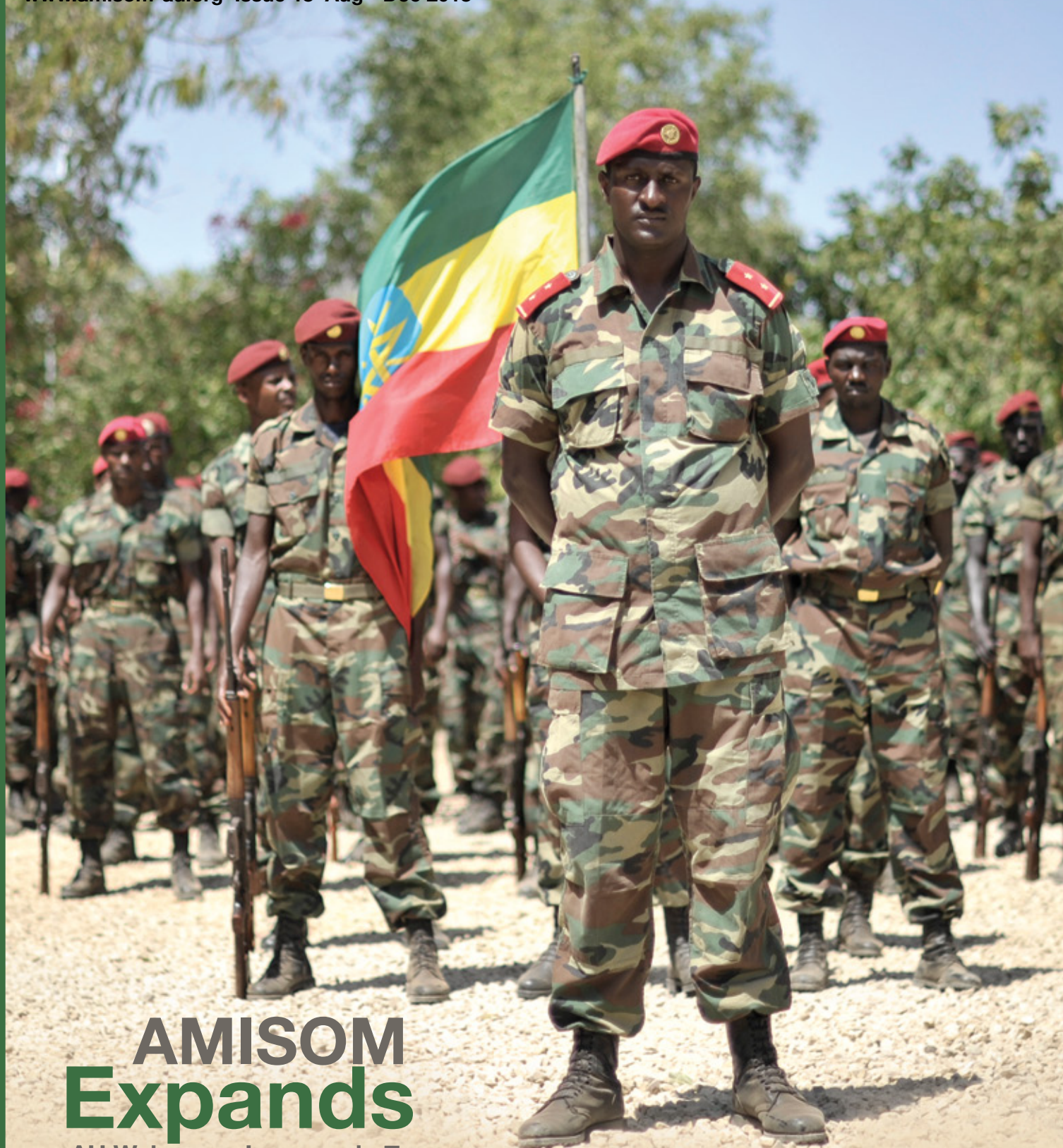


AMISOM



REVIEW

www.amisom-au.org Issue 13 Aug - Dec 2013



AMISOM Expands

AU Welcomes Increase in Troops

CELEBRATING *50 Years* OF AFRICAN UNITY



Message from the SRCC

Editorial by Special Representative, Ambassador Mahamat Saleh Annadif

Welcome to the 13th edition of the AMISOM Review.

We have come to the end of yet another momentous year for AMISOM and look forward to the beginning of what is likely to be another year of progress in Somalia. In this issue, we take a look at the UN Security Council authorization in November of the expansion of AMISOM's strength by 4000 troops and what this means for the international efforts to stabilize Somalia and combat international terrorists within its borders.

As the AMISOM Review notes, the increase will allow AMISOM to transition from the defensive posture it had adopted following more than two years of expansion and consolidation, to enabling the Somali National Security Forces secure more areas of south-central Somalia from the Al Qaeda-affiliated extremist group, Al Shabaab. The two-year, 3 battalion surge will also be crucial to creating the space for the Somali state to continue to rebuild its forces, extend its authority, deliver services to the people and work towards a constitutional referendum and elections in 2016. As Somalia is able to progressively take charge of its own security, so AMISOM will be able to draw down its troops with a view to an eventual withdrawal from Somalia.

Over the last year, AMISOM has also carried out a series of events to engage with the Somali diaspora

in Europe and North America. The participation of the diaspora is critical to Somalia's re-emergence and stability. Their remittances back home are not only Somalia's largest source of both hard currency and "foreign" direct assistance, but the returning members of the diaspora also bring with them much-needed skills in commerce and governance. It is thus crucial to keep them abreast of developments within the country and to address any concerns they may have. The latest in a series of AMISOM engagement events was held over two days at the beginning of October in Minneapolis, Minnesota,

Somalia, and the Gender Office is helping to give voice to the voiceless victims of such assaults.

This issue also spotlights AMISOM's activities in the Hiiran region where the Djiboutian contingent has been extremely active, despite its limitations in terms of numbers and equipment, not only in training members of the national security forces, but also in fostering reconciliation between competing clans and militias in the region.

I take this opportunity to send my condolences to the victims of November's cowardly attack on a police station there which killed at least 19 people including

The participation of the diaspora is critical to Somalia's re-emergence and stability

USA. A full report on the event is contained in the pages of this issue.

We also feature AMISOM's initiatives in helping Somalia tackle the spectra of lawlessness and especially sexual exploitation and abuse of its women and girls. The Police and the Civilian Components have been active in teaching basic self-defense skills to female members of neighborhood watch teams from the different regions of

one soldier from the Djibouti contingent as well as innocent civilians and officers from the Somali Police Force. Such attacks illustrate the need to keep up the pressure on the Al Shabaab and to deny them the opportunity to plot and plan atrocities in the Somali hinterland. It is a cause to which AMISOM is committed and we will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with our Somali brothers and sisters until it is accomplished.

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Publisher: Information Department of the
African Union Mission Somalia

Find us online:



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News Roundup

AMISOM holds a Leadership Capacity Building Conference for Somali Youth

December 9th 2013 - The Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) supported by AMISOM concluded a three-day leadership capacity building conference for the Somali youth in Kampala.

The three-day conference provided an interactive forum between AMISOM, the FGS and the Somali youth to establish and maintain effective communication between youth groups and the government on policy awareness.

The discussions focused

on the role of the youth in the implementation of the 'Six Pillar Policy' of Somalia namely Supremacy of the Law and Good Governance; Economic Recovery-Livelihood and Economic Infrastructure; Peace Building-Social Reconciliation through building bridges of trust; Service Delivery-Health, Education and Environment; International Relations-building collaborative relations and polishing the national image; and the Unity and Integrity of the country.

AMISOM and Stakeholders conclude a four-day Gender Workshop on Strengthening Somalia's judicial Capacity to address Gender Based Violence



the judicial systems to ensure that they uphold and respect women's rights, was attended by representatives from the Federal Government of Somalia working in the judicial institutions, AMISOM and representatives from civil society organizations.

Djibouti, December 5th - The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in collaboration with the Federal Government of Somalia and the civil society concluded a workshop on strengthening Somalia's judicial capacity to address Gender Based Violence.

The workshop which aimed at focusing on building the capacity of

The workshop was officially opened by Djibouti Minister of Gender H.E. Hasna Barkat. In her opening remarks she praised the participants for their commitment in ensuring that the rights of women are respected and protected, and reiterated Djibouti's support to the cause.

AMISOM and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for Somalia concluded the first Somalia United Nations Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination Course

November 30th 2013 - AMISOM in partnership with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and United Nations Support Office for AMISOM (UNSOA) concluded the first Somalia specific United Nations Humanitarian, Civil-Military course.

The course aimed at promoting the humanitarian-military coordination and improving the effectiveness of international relief operations in Somalia. The five day course primarily focused on the use of foreign military and civil defense assets in support of humanitarian activities, as well as improving the collaboration between AMISOM and civilian organizations in complex emergencies.

UNSC approves request for additional troops



November 11th 2013 - The United Nations Security Council authorized a temporary surge for the African Union peacekeeping force in Somalia. Troop numbers will increase from the current 17, 731 to 22,126. The surge also includes an increase in logistical support. The council unanimously adopted the resolution and extended the deployment of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) until 31 October 2014.

The Council underlined that the increase in force strength would provide short-term enhancement of AMISOM's military capacity, after which a decrease in the Mission's force strength will be considered. The council also endorsed the UN's recommendation that the Somali National Army (SNA) be provided with "a package of non-lethal support which includes transport, food, fuel, shelter and medical support through a trust fund".

The resolution comes in response to the request made by the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) in its communiqué dated 10th October 2013.



Jubba Reconciliation Efforts

November 4th 2013 - A Three day reconciliation conference for the Jubba communities was officially opened by Somali Prime Minister Abdi Farah Shirdoon in Mogadishu who expressed his optimism of achieving a lasting solution for the problems of the Gedo and Jubba regions.

The 200 delegates discussed ways to enhance on-going peace building and reconciliation efforts, how to increase security and re-integrate armed groups and extend the fight against terrorism, and provide for economic progress and social development.

The communiqué signed by all delegations committed the parties to continued reconciliation, an inclusive Interim Jubba Administration, amalgamating all local forces into the Somali National Army and to working alongside the Somali Federal Government and AMISOM to clear Al-Shabaab from the remainder of the region.

The participants agreed to fully accept the Addis Ababa Agreement of August 2013 and to strengthen the role of civil society in the Jubba regions.

African Union Peace and Security Council visit to Somalia

October 25th 2013 - The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union paid its first field visit to Somalia. The council members were received in Mogadishu by the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, Ambassador Mahamat Saleh Annadif and held meetings with the Somali President H.E Hassan Sheikh Mohamud.

The Commissioner of the AU Peace and Security Council and Djiboutian ambassador to the African Union, H.E. Mohamed Idriss Farah said deliberations with the President raised important issues that would be further discussed in Addis Ababa. The meeting also discussed the progress that Somalia has made in recovering from decades of anarchy.

The PSC is the AU's standing decision-making body, responsible for the maintenance of continental peace and security and comprises 15 members, elected by the AU Assembly of Head of States and Government.



AMISOM Head visits Beledweyne

October 15th 2013-The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia (SRCC), Ambassador Mahamat Saleh Annadif accompanied by Senior AMISOM leadership in Somalia visited AU forces stationed in Beledweyne's Hiraan region. The delegation was received by AMISOM's Sector 4 Contingent Commander Colonel Osman Doubad and the local administration.

The visit to the region which coincided with Eidul Adha celebrations was to get first-hand information on the overall progress of the forces in the region. Ambassador Annadif commended the troops for their relentless effort in mobilising support during flooding, the subsequent cholera

outbreak, clan mediation efforts and the securing of key facilities in the region. The delegation also had an opportunity to tour the Lama Galaay military training camp where the recently deployed AMISOM police have been conducting training for the Somali Police Force.



AMISOM concludes a three-day CIMIC conference

September 19th 2013 - AMISOM concluded a three-day conference promoting humanitarian civil-military coordination and civilian protection.

For the first time, AMISOM Civil-Military Coordination (CIMIC) officers from all sectors came together in Mogadishu to share experiences and plan how best to implement the mission's mandate and enhance cooperation with civilians. UNSOA supported the conference, with UN OCHA, UNSOM and other UN agencies delivering thematic sessions, leading on case studies that prompted lively discussions on civil-military coordination.

The conference analyzed the current situation in the four sectors of South Central Somalia and explored ways in which to enrich cooperation with civilian organizations. Focusing on civil-military coordination, the conference also looked at issues affecting vulnerable groups in the complex operating environment of Somalia, especially the issue of gender-based violence and the protection of children's rights.

AMISOM Civil Affairs Unit hands over vocational training school to Somali government



August 23rd 2013 - The civil affairs unit handed over a vocational training school located in Mogadishu's Wadajir District to the Federal Government of Somalia.

The school built with support from the Danish Government consists of eight classrooms, an administration block and ablution facilities. The school will provide vocational training to over 360 Somali students in a single intake.

The handover of the school was attended by the President of the Federal Government of Somalia, H.E. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (SRCC), Ambassador Mahamat Saleh Annadif.

The AMISOM civilian component has the primary role of assisting the Federal Government of Somalia in re-establishing functioning state institutions and delivering services to the Somali people.

AMISOM responds to women needs in Baidoa

Somali women from Baidoa town had reason to smile after AMISOM hosted a two-day free medical center to women in the region who in the past have had to go as far as Mogadishu, Hargeisa and Galkaayo to seek medical care.

Dr Asha Omar, a Somali gynecologist working at the AMISOM Out-Patient Department (OPD) in Mogadishu visited Baidoa's AMISOM hospital as part of her obstetrics-gynecology practice.

Accompanied by two female nurses, Dr Asha provided antenatal care including hi-tech CT scan services for expectant mothers as well as offering free gynecological consultation, treatment and check-ups that the women desperately needed.

Due to the poor state of medical facilities in the country coupled with cultural barriers that discourage women from seeking help for their ailments, Somali women have borne the full brunt of the prolonged civil war and together with children are the worst affected by the conflict.



Two-year anniversary of the withdrawal of Al Shabaab from Mogadishu

August 6th 2013 - Somalia marked the second anniversary since the liberation of the capital city Mogadishu from Al-Qaeda-affiliated terrorists Al-Shabaab. The expulsion of Al-Shabaab from fixed positions in the city was a significant strategic achievement and set the stage for other successes across the country.

The city has since experienced resurgence in all aspects of political, economic and socio-cultural life. Shops have re-opened, markets and homes are being rebuilt. Many Somalis are opting to return home while the number of commercial flights in and out of Mogadishu is on the increase.

Securing the capital city was the first phase of the original AMISOM concept of operations. AMISOM has since completed the second phase which included helping the government secure major towns like Kismayo, Baidoa and Beledweyne.

AMISOM troop rotations



Many of the troops serving under the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) have ended their tour of duty and have handed over to their successors who will continue the mission serving alongside their Somali National Army colleagues.

The troops are mandated to fight against the Al Qaeda linked al Shabaab group. The extremist group has already lost a string of towns and cities they once controlled in South-Central Somalia; which has paved the way for improved security and an internationally recognised Federal government.

After 13 months of service, the men and women went back to their countries; replaced by colleagues who will now serve their own 12-month tour. The rotations also included senior AMISOM leadership in the various sectors. The current Sector 1 commander is Brig. General Dick Olum who replaced Brig Michael Ondoga, Brig General Walter Raria has taken over from Brig General Anthony Ngere's in Sector 2, Sector 3 commander Colonel John Habarugira has stepped in for Colonel Gerald Bigirimana and in Sector 4, Col Ousman Doubad continues to command the sector.

AMISOM currently boast of troops from Sierra Leone, Burundi, Djibouti, Kenya as well as Uganda.

Expansion of AMISOM: Just the First Step

In November this year, the UN Security Council approved the expansion of the authorized AMISOM force limit by a further 4000 troops. It is impossible to overstate the importance of this development. As a joint United Nations-African Union review of AMISOM had noted, following a more than two-year advance across the country, AMISOM had helped the Somali National Security Forces to push out the Al Qaeda-affiliated Al Shabaab militants from most of Somalia's major urban areas. AMISOM had, however, reached the limit of its operational strength and could not undertake further expansion without endangering the gains already made.

Though severely weakened, the Al Shabaab extremists are taking advantage of the relative freedom they had in the vast Somali countryside to regroup, plan and execute attacks against civilians

lives, are an indicator of this.

Thus the resolution to reinforce AMISOM could not have been more welcome. It is important to note that the temporary 18-24 month surge in troops is designed to expand the space and opportunity for the Somali government to reestablish state authority across South-Central Somalia, rebuild its security forces, deliver basic services to the Somali people and prepare for a constitutional referendum and elections by 2016. The achievement of these benchmarks would set the stage for beginning of a drawdown of AMISOM with a view to its eventual exit from Somalia.

Also it is important to note that the Security Council has reiterated the need for the deployment of force enablers and multipliers, in particular the twelve military helicopters

authorized in previous resolutions. These are crucial to enabling AMISOM to secure its supply lines in order to impede Al Shabaab's resupply and its freedom of movement. The extra troops and assets are urgently needed and though it is yet unclear where these will come from, several

in cities within the country and in the regions. The recent bombings in Beledweyne and Mogadishu as well as the bloody attack on the Westgate mall in Nairobi, all of which claimed dozens of

countries across the continent have expressed a willingness to contribute to AMISOM. Given the fact that under the "Burundi model" borrowed from the 2003-2004 AU Mission in Burundi,

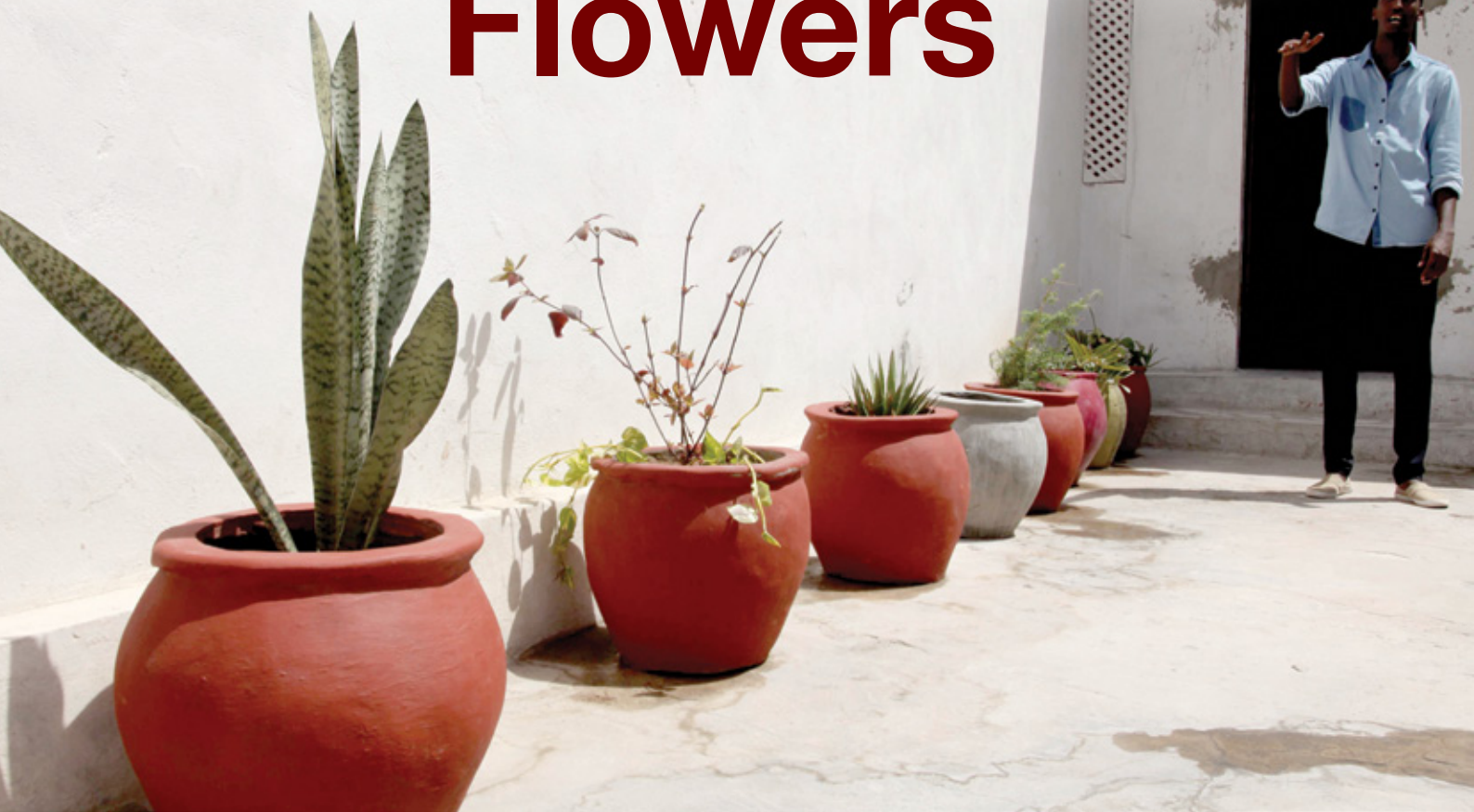
countries deploying troops and equipment to AMISOM shoulder the costs of that deployment, backing from bilateral and multi-lateral partners in affording support from AU countries will be crucial.

The AU mission in Somalia also welcomes the UN Security Council undertaking to provide logistical support to front line units of the Somali National Army in joint operations with AMISOM. This includes food and water, fuel, transport, tents and in-theatre medical evacuation. This will go a long way to supplementing AMISOM efforts to beef up the capacity of Somalia's national forces to eventually take over responsibility for security in the country.

Though widely perceived as a successful example of an African solution to an African problem, AMISOM continues to rely heavily on financial support originating outside the continent. This support continues to be very welcome, but given that Africa is now home to the world's fastest growing economies, the move is now on African countries to begin to shoulder more of the financial burden for the mission, particularly via un-caveated contributions to the UN-established AMISOM Trust Fund.

As the primary instrument of the international effort to help stabilize and secure Somalia, AMISOM must be adequately resourced and equipped. The Security Council Resolution is a great first step in this regard and it will not be the last.

Mogadishu Florist: Replacing Fear with Flowers



After more than 20 years of war, one would think romance would be dead in a country like Somalia. However, the opening of a new florist

“This feels like a good time to introduce flowers and color back into the Somali community”

shop has revived the romance in the capital city Mogadishu.

Tucked in a building in the bustling street of Makkah al Mukkarrahma,

a small florist shop flourishes. Established in June 2013 by Mohamed Mohamoud Sheikh and his sister, Amber Gardens Florist is the center of warmth and color with the beautiful flowers that line its walls.

Mohamed and his sister decided to combine their love for the great outdoors and garden establishment with helping revive courtship and landscaping back into the streets of Somalia. He admits that his goal for opening the shop was

to get Mogadishu back to its green scenery similar to the pre-war era. “Mogadishu is now seen to be dry and desert-like. But there was a time where we had palm trees and greenery growing around the city. It is sad that they are not there anymore”.

Somalia has had an interminable culture of nomadic presence from the herdsmen leaving their livestock and camels behind to flatter their courtships with poetry and love songs to his companions. The culture promoted romance, warmth and courtship. However, decades of civil war and Islamic insurgencies banning things such as television and music gradually took away from it.



With the newly felt liberation in Mogadishu acquired by government forces supported by AMISOM, the city is slowly getting back to normalcy with vibrant music being played around the city and TV shows revamped.

“This feels like a good time to introduce flowers and color back into the Somali community,” says bright-eyed Mohamed as he smiles.

Since the Islamic insurgents were banished from the capital Mogadishu, the city has seen an influx of new innovative business flourishing. Pizza parlors, museums, child play centers and gyms are among the many.

Mohamed was born in Italy and raised in Tanzania before making the

brave decision to move back to his motherland. He started by opening a launderette in the country’s capital after realizing the huge gap in the market for such a service, and then later decided to open a florist with his sister.

Due to the dry essence and lack of resources, it is still not possible to grow certain flowers such as roses in the city. Therefore, Mohamed usually imports the more sophisticated flowers from the neighboring East African countries.

Also after undertaking some market research, Mohamed realized that his customers would only opt for fresh flowers if they lasted. He has

now found a chemical from Nairobi which preserves the flowers for up to 6months. “I have a small nursery within the flower shop where I observe the effects by exposing the flowers to natural humidity.”

The love for greenery and flowers has also inspired Mohamed to open the first national park in the capital city. He wants this to be a community funded project, “I believe if we come together as a community we could easily make this happen. I want this to be something we have done for ourselves and hence have something to be proud of as a nation.”

Mohamed is also a philanthropist and donates to the Internally Displaced People’s camps through his businesses. “I want to set up something which helps the youth whose lives has been stolen by the years of anarchy”.

Mohamed could not end his conversation without sending out a message to his diaspora counterparts. “I believe this is a good time in Somalia and it’s an even better time for the Somali Diaspora to come back and be a part of this new era of the Somali history and help rebuild our nation. Mogadishu is experiencing peace.”

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To fulfill her and other young girls' dreams, Farhia and her team have created programmes that give women in the Somali community a chance to voice their opinions and feel empowered



AMAN Radio: Empowering the Women of Somalia

In an unremarkable building along the bustling Makka al Mukarramah Road, a group of women are intently focused on their computer screens, playing and replaying sound pieces. Somali music plays softly through the speakers as the presenter fits her headset and starts the show. Welcome to Aman Radio, the first all-female run radio station in Mogadishu.

Prolonged conflict has left Somalia's women as some of the most disadvantaged in the world. In Mogadishu's internally displaced camps, rape is rife and domestic violence is rampant. Despite condemnation of acts of violence against women and efforts by aid agencies and civil society to curb their marginalisation, one voice has been conspicuously absent; the voice of the Somali women themselves. This is what

Aman Radio seeks to fill.

The station was established in March 2012 although the ideas and planning had been in the pipeline for over six years prior. Because of the level of insecurity caused by the presence of al-Shabaab, the founders decided to hold it off until Mogadishu became a safe place.

Launched by Nasib Information and Media Training Center for women with financial support from active female Somali journalists in Finland, the radio's mission is to raise the profile of Somali women by discussing topics related to them as well as providing media training to get more women qualified.

The center offers young women interested in media a number of courses in journalism, which Aman Radio will

complement by providing graduates an opportunity to practice their new skills. The radio also has its own center offering young women with an academic media background a number of training courses including, Journalism, photography and filmography.

Starting off as a trainer and programme manager, Farhiya Farah Roble rose through the ranks to become the station's director. "I joined Aman radio in late 2007 and was involved from the planning stages of the radio," she says that in the beginning AMAN started as a training center for women in media. It was during this time that her and her team realized the huge gap in the Somali media. "With no outlet focusing solely on women, we decided to work on concepts to create a radio station produced by women targeting women," explains Farhiya.

"I want to speak for the disadvantaged and those whose voices never receive attention"

Farhia always dreamed of working in the media industry. "I used to see my father listening to the radio and wonder where the voices were coming from. As I got older, I discovered the voices behind the Radio and TV and knew this was what I wanted to do and that this was a chance of also making a difference in people's lives."

To fulfill her and other young girls' dreams, Farhia and her team have created programmes that give women in the Somali community a chance to voice their opinions and feel empowered: "At Aman radio we strive to empower women by giving them a platform to voice their opinions, concerns and comments about what is going on in Somalia politically, economically and socially." She adds that this put emphasis on women's education and helping women excel and pursue their desired careers.

Aman Radio broadcasts a variety

of shows which include call-in shows, debates and cooking shows. They also discuss a wide variety of issues including youth, health, their local communities as well as current affairs in the country and around the world. "We have a show called 'Hoolada Haweenka' meaning 'The works of Women'. On this show we discuss the different careers Somali women have embarked on such as civil servants, entrepreneurs, teachers, nurses and doctors among other careers.

Anisa Abdullahi, Radio Aman Editor explains: "I chose journalism because I want to amplify the voices of my society and especially those of Somali women. I want to speak for the disadvantaged and those whose voices never receive attention." The news editor says Aman is dedicated to social issues and rarely discusses politics. "We focus on the community, women, healthcare, education and the rebuilding of the country. So in

some little way, I want to help my society by highlighting their needs and celebrating their accomplishments."

In a country which was largely inaccessible for international journalists during two decades of civil war, Somalia's journalists were the only eyes and the ears for the rest of the world, witnessing what was happening during Somalia's darkest days.

In recent years, the country still ranks as one of the most dangerous for journalists to work in. Last year, up to 19 journalists were killed while dozens have been targeted for their work. Those working for Aman are undaunted: "Well it's the same as all the other journalists, sometimes there are certain risks when it comes to covering news in certain places but other than that it's fine. I live and work in Mogadishu and the security has improved a lot. It's much safer than it used to be."

The impact Aman Radio has already made means these ladies will continue to provide a voice for Somali women regardless of the risk they face everyday. To their listeners, Aman radio is a group of inspiring young women fulfilling their dreams, who stand as role models and a real future for women across Somalia.

Kismayo Airport Veteran

"I have been here for so long and I've persevered because I love my job"

It's a bright morning in Kismayo, a port city in southern Somalia. Adan Mohamed slowly emerges from a mud-walled house, his orange reflector vest clashing with the determined sun. It's another working day, similar to the last 30 years he has worked as an airport marshaller at the Kismayo International Airport.

"A marshaller is someone who guides the aircraft when it lands and leads it to the docking area," explains the father of four who handles an average of fourteen flights a week. Adan is the only employee

at the Kismayo airport. Officially, there is no employee. Following Somalia's descent into anarchy and civil war, the civil aviation authority was rendered useless and staff fled the airport.

But not Adan, high school graduate, he chose to stick there and in the two decades of incessant violence, he has single-handedly run the operations at the airport and continued working without pay since the collapse of the central government.

He controls the movement of aircrafts to and from their designated docking area



using a simple hand-held paddle to relay signals and guide the pilots.

Adan explains the airport has not been the easiest to work from adding that, "Even today, with flights in and out every day, Adan is effectively a one-man-band. There is no airport authority or any representation from civil aviation." Kismayo Airport's control tower facilities are basic at best. So it's up to the marshaller to make sure every plane takes off and lands safely: "There are challenges," he says. "That is expected because this is a country that has been without law and order for a long time."

The Airport is located in Kismayo, the capital of the Lower Jubba region in Somalia. It is approximately 14 km from the city. Following the outbreak of the civil war, the airport was at the center of heavy fighting, quickly closed down and its buildings badly damaged. Kismayo Airport was officially brought under the Interim Jubba Administration in August 2013. It has been agreed that the management of the facility will be transferred to the Somali Federal Government after six months. Revenue and resources generated from the airport will also be allocated to Jubaland's service

delivery and security sectors as well as local institutional development.

There is hope that many of the badly-damaged buildings will get much-needed renovation soon. Since 1991, little work has been done there due to lack of funds

because I love my job."

The father of four maintains this dedication since his early days in the job. He worked as a trainee at the airport during the regime of the central government and credits two men who

"Even today, with flights in and out every day, Adan is effectively a one-man-band."

and stability in the country. Adan has made the best of what he has been able to find and constructed his own tools.

"There is no one to complain to, so sometime I may as well get on with finding solutions to this problem because am the only one." Determined to carry on his pioneering mission, he continues without financial or material support, single-handedly keeping airport operational. On this profession, he says, "It is what I studied. Anyone who is trained for a profession loves that profession and even if there are challenges, the passion is still there. I have been here for so long and I've persevered

worked as air traffic controller and ground marshal respectively with his motivation. They encouraged him. "I learnt from them," he says. "By the time the war broke out and the government collapsed I was already very experienced." After his two mentors left, he took up the mantle: "I never left even for a day. Despite all the challenges, I have remained here. I cannot start to tell you about all the problems."

Adan continues to hope that Somalia will be able to stand on its own two feet again one day. Until that day, he will continue to contribute in the only way he can and keep Kismayo airport running and the flights safely coming in and out.

Change of Guard: A Term Well Served



Dhobley and captured Kismayo as well as moving to Beledweyne.

It was during General Guttu's tenure that significant political progress took place with the Transitional Federal Government coming to an end and the establishment of the first internationally recognized government in twenty years.

In August 2012, elders representing

to come back and rebuild the nation. We have new hotels, commercial centers and the security is convenient for businesses who have extended their work hours past sunset," explains Gen. Guttu.

In the years since their initial deployment, African Union forces have been a constant feature in the news as they have brought large swathes of the

In order to move forward from the current phase, following a request from AMISOM command, the UN Security Council approved an increase in troop numbers for AMISOM as well as a support package for the Somali National Army. This will allow AMISOM now to stretch further and clear beyond the boundaries they have been holding as well as continue to provide support and training to their Somali counterparts.

In the past year, Lt. Gen Andrew Guttu has worked closely with the Somali community. Whenever travelling or visiting newly liberated areas, the Force Commander has consulted the elders who are instrumental in the Somali community. The FC explained the importance of civilian and military engagement as a vital part of any mission and hopes that the new leadership will continue engaging with the Somali people.

While reflecting on his time in Somalia, Lt. Gen. Guttu summarizes his advice for the incoming Force Commander, Lt. Gen Silas Ntigurirwa; urging him to "continue with the momentum and rid Al Shabaab from Somalia."

He remains optimistic about the mission's prospects: "The increase in troop numbers and force enablers such as helicopters will enable us to move to new areas more effectively."

Looking back on his time in Somalia, the former Force Commander admits he'll look back at it nostalgically. "For this country which has become my second home, I only hope for the best."

"When I came to Somalia, I knew the battle was going to be a complicated one but I was prepared for the war and so were the troops and immediately we hit the ground running"

all the clans in Somalia nominated 275 members of Parliament. The MPs elected a Speaker before electing a President in September the same year.

Behind the scenes during this momentous period for the country, AMISOM's main challenge was providing a conducive environment for the ongoing work, including providing security for multiple venues, actors and events.

In the months since, confidence in AMISOM's work and optimism in the country's future has encouraged many Somalis living abroad to return back home: "The Somali diaspora continue

country under legitimate government control. In recent months, this tempo has slowed and analysts have claimed this has renewed Al Shabaab's resolve to intensify attacks.

"There are many phases of war. Once new areas are liberated, we need time to consolidate what we have attained, organize the population while the government comes in," explains Gen. Guttu. "We can't just move immediately because this risks what we have gained. We are not giving Al Shabaab time to reorganize; in fact they are still in shock and wherever they are right now, they're still on the losing side."

When the outgoing Lt. Gen Andrew Guttu took command of the African Union Mission in Somalia in May 2012, it was a crucial time for Somalia's history and the mission. While the Al Qaeda-affiliated terror group Al Shabaab had withdrawn from Somalia, it still maintained a significant presence in the country's hinterlands.

Taking the battle to the insurgents in Somalia was a challenge even for the highly experienced former commandant of the Ugandan Senior Command and Staff and College (SCSC): "When I came to Somalia, I knew the battle was going to be a complicated one but I was prepared for the war and so were the troops and immediately we hit the ground running."

General Guttu took over command of the AU forces in Somalia on the 3rd of May 2012. He arrived at a time when the AU Mission in Somalia was increasing its troop strength to 17,731 from the then 12,000 and when three additional countries joined the mission.

"When I joined it was only Uganda and Burundi but a few months later, Djibouti, Kenya and Sierra Leone joined the mission" adding that the main challenge was bringing all these countries with completely different military doctrines together to serve under one mission.

The AMISOM frontline was at Mogadishu University on the road to Afgooye. United Nation Security Council Resolution 2036 gave the commander

the remit to establish a presence in the four AMISOM sectors set out in its own strategic concept of Operations. The AU troops were authorized to take all necessary measures in those sectors, in coordination with the Somali security forces, to reduce the threat posed by Al-Shabaab and other armed opposition groups in order to establish conditions for effective governance country-wide.

Existing Ugandan and Burundian forces continued with the battle in Mogadishu while the additional troops deployed to the different sectors of Kismayo, Beledweyne and Baidoa.

The troops scored a string of strategic wins including opening the very significant 241 KM Baidoa-Mogadishu road. The troops also moved from



"For this country which has become my second home, I only hope for the best"



Somalia's top military chief declares military revival



Nine months ago, Major General Dahir Adan Elmi was appointed to one of the toughest jobs. He was selected to head the Somalia National Army.

The fall of the central government in 1991 brought about the collapse of the state institutions, and the military was not spared. General Dahir says restructuring

“It is very rare to see a living soldier decorated with a gold medal because many of my comrades who attained this uppermost rank of bravery have died in the line of duty”

Somalia's army remains the country's uppermost priority.

The Somali National Army (SNA) still struggles with its performance, suffering from low morale, lack of basic equipment and all this in the face of bloody attacks from Al-Shabaab. Building a capable army after years of war in Somalia is no

easy feat. After 22 years of quasi non-existence, the military is a fragmented combination of older trained generals and raw untested recruits. The command structure is fragile and the foot-soldiers in need of training.

The army is however slowly recovering and rebuilding itself. With support from the African Union troops, it has already played an important role in liberating most of southern and Central Somalia from al Shabaab and its current commander is optimistic. Speaking at Villa Somalia, the former artillery specialist said his tenure has come at an exciting time, when the country is experiencing positive strides and enjoying relative peace: “The Somali Army, supported by the forces from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), has continued to win against the al-Shabaab and the security is improving in the country”.

During the civil war, like millions of

other Somalis, General Elmi fled Somalia and relocated to Boston in the United States of America. In 2012, he made a decision to come back and serve his nation. Coming in as a staff officer at the Ministry of Defence, he rose the ranks to advisor to the former Chief of Defense Forces before taking over the top position himself. Despite the challenges, the army general is already winning admirers among his soldiers. His background and previous achievements are an inspiration. General Elmi is the only living Somali military officer with a gold medal for bravery and service to his nation. “It is very rare to see a living soldier decorated with a gold medal because many of my comrades who attained this uppermost rank of bravery have died in the line of duty,” explains the General.

In March 2013, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) eased restrictions on selling arms to Somalia, lifting an embargo put in place 20 years

ago to stop the sale of weapons to warlords. General Dahir says the move will help the army to better equip itself. “More logistical and financial assistance is needed from the international community”.

But he adds, other pressing challenges need addressing; not least the lack of a military medical system to treat and cater for its troops, lack of adequate equipment including uniforms, force enablers such as tanks and planes and most importantly, the lack of proper military camps to accommodate the troops. Many of Somalia's vast military installations were either destroyed by the war or occupied by displaced persons.

Lack of pay has also been a key contributor to low morale: “The Somali government is now ready to pay all Somalia military soldiers their monthly wage. This has really helped us to manage the force because they

feel they have a sense of responsibility to their country and for the first time, we can easily relocate the soldiers across the country,” said Major General Elmi. Challenges aside, he insisted: “We are a small force that has just been reborn, but our morale is steadfastly growing, and if the challenges we are facing are to be addressed, then we can do a lot.”

The General urged the people of Somalia, particularly the troops, to remain focused at this crucial moment in order to defeat the remaining Al-Shabaab militants. He added Somalia is currently training its special forces selected from across the country, and is hopeful that the end is near for Al-Shabaab. He urged the Somali youths brainwashed by Al-Shabaab to repent and join their compatriots in rebuilding their country.

The Somali army may have a long way to go but its top man is confident that with the support from AMISOM it can continue to grow and improve.



AMISOM Engages Diaspora



The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (SRCC) Ambassador Mahamat Saleh Annadif met with the Somali community in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA on 5-6 October 2013. This is the second in an ongoing series of consultative engagements with the Somali diaspora communities in the UK, U.A.E and in the Scandinavian countries.

The two day engagement began with a town hall meeting attended by hundreds of Somalis from different parts of North America: Imams, women representative, community leaders, various Somali organizations, youth and members of the Federal Government.

Minnesota is the largest home of Somalis in the United States and the community is considered an important contributor to restoring peace and rebuilding Somalia.

Coming at a time when Somalis in the Diaspora are returning to Somalia in record numbers due to improved security in much of the country, the aim of the conference was to serve as a forum for idea-generation and to promote the participation of the Somali Diaspora in their country's peace and reconstruction process. The conference provided a unique opportunity for Somalis in the Diaspora to receive a first-hand account of the African Union's intervention in Somalia, including the mandate and activities of the civilian, police and military components of AMISOM since its deployment in 2007.

During the town hall meeting, Ambassador Annadif took the opportunity to urge the Somali community present to send a message to Somalis to put an end to the war and encourage the political leaders to

reconcile: "AMISOM is not all about war, it has a wide range of windows, it also promotes national reconciliation, capacity building of the Somali National Army and rehabilitation of institutions." The Ambassador challenged the Somali Diaspora to join in the rebuilding of Somalia. "I call on all of you to double your efforts in the support of the Federal Government and the people as we rebuild the country. We are all here to listen to your solutions," he said.

Ambassador Annadif held separate meetings with the Somali representatives in Minneapolis and visited the Somali-owned business and community center.

Retired Col. Ali Amer, a representative from the Somali Government, said AMISOM personnel have sacrificed their lives to make Somalia peaceful. "The AU mission in Somalia continues to help the

"I call on all of you to double your efforts in the support of the Federal Government and the people as we rebuild the country"

government and the Somali National Army to defeat Al-Shabaab, which is an imminent danger to the Somali people." urging the Diaspora Somalis to return to Somalia which is in need of skilled workers.

Mr. Sadik Warfa, a Somali community leader in Minnesota and the chair of the Local Organizing Committee was at the forefront of engagements happening with various key stakeholders in Minneapolis. During the town hall meeting, Sadik called for the Somali Diaspora in North

America to work together and give constructive solutions to AMISOM about the best way that Somalia's problems could be solved.

"We are very happy for the work that AMISOM has done to help Somalia stand on its own feet and we also pay tribute to sacrifices of AMISOM personnel to assist Somalia be stable and peaceful. Furthermore we want AMISOM to help rebuild the Somali National Army so as to take over the security of the country in the future."

Enhancing AMISOM's image in TCCs & PCCs



AMISOM continues to raise awareness of the mission and its achievements in Troop Contributing Countries (TCC) and Police Contributing Countries (PCC). This is carried out mainly through events where the work of AMISOM is presented, either by AMISOM representatives or by former AMISOM officers and selected representatives from government agencies. A key aim

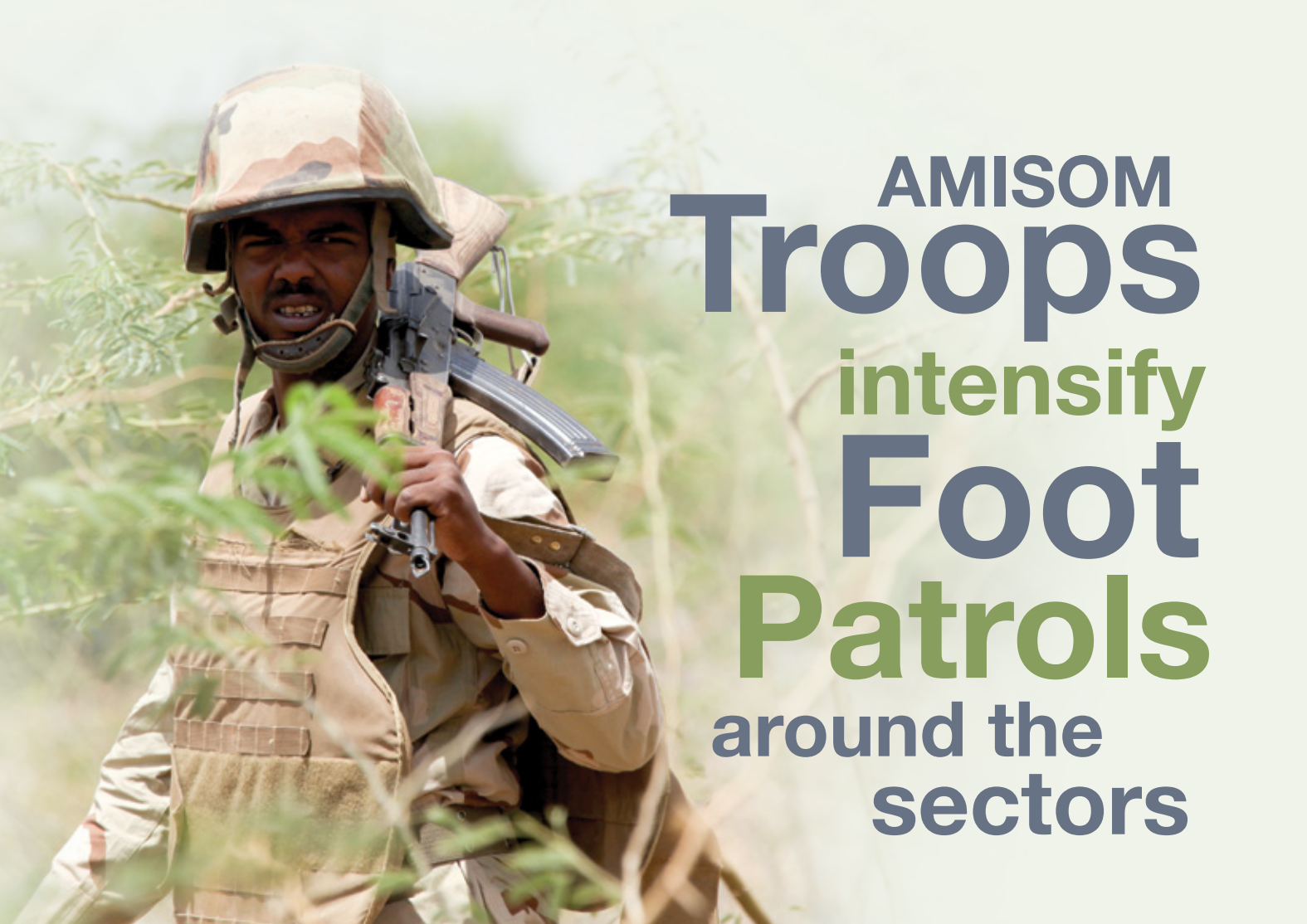
is to demonstrate AMISOM's work through photographs and films so that the audience can get a real feel for what AMISOM contributors are doing on the ground in Somalia.

The goal is to build support for the respective countries and their government's participation in the AU peacekeeping mission in Somalia, raise public awareness about the role and work of AMISOM and keep the public

informed about the activities of their respective troops. So far such events have been held in Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, Djibouti, Sierra Leone and Nigeria.

The activities have also helped highlight the critical importance of communication in a peacekeeping mission such as AMISOM and the central role of the media in keeping AMISOM in the public eye.





AMISOM Troops intensify Foot Patrols around the sectors



In November 12, a daytime attack on a police station in Beledweyne, the capital of Hiiraan Region led to the death of 19 people. The attack was claimed by Al Qaeda-affiliated terror group Al Shabaab.

Though severely weakened, Al Shabaab is taking advantage of the relative freedom they have in the vast Somali countryside to regroup, plan and execute attacks against civilians in neighbouring cities. The recent bombings in Beledweyne and Mogadishu, all of which claimed dozens of lives, are testament to this.

In the last few years, AMISOM has helped the Somali National Security Forces to push out the Al Qaeda-affiliated Al Shabaab militants from most of Somalia's major urban areas. More recently though, the AU forces have neared the limit of their operational capability and have not been able to continue to push for further expansion without endangering the gains they have already made. It has been harder still for the Somali National Army to make any significant gains, given its lack of resources and personnel.

AMISOM continued to hold the ground gained, conducted regular clearance patrols and maintained

security and confidence within the local population. Indeed in some areas, in order to show a strong and unified posture and maintain security, AMISOM troops have upped the number of patrols they carry out across the sector.

In Beledweyne, the Djibouti Contingent in collaboration with the Somali National Army (SNA) carries out regular joint foot patrols. As the Djiboutian Deputy Force Commander, Lt. Col. Ibrahim Ali says to his soldiers before a patrol: "The foot patrol is very different from vehicular patrol. This provides us with better situation awareness and observation capability. Al-Shabaab has changed tactic and they have resorted to planting IEDs. We have a responsibility to make this town a safe haven for civilians."

Proceeding in single file, the soldiers march through the town, positioning themselves in strategic areas. The key areas of the foot patrol include the road that directly leads to the Lama Galaay Military Camp, major junctions, the market and the Liiq Liiqato Bridge on the Shabelle River that divides the town in two.

In Baidoa, the Burundian contingent



also continues to conduct daily foot patrols through the town, supplementing the joint night patrols they carry out with the Somali National Army. Although the incidence of IEDs exploding while soldiers are on foot patrol has so far been minimal, they are a constant security concern for both AMISOM troops and local civilians. These patrols are also designed to flush out suspected al Shabaab remnants that pose a threat to the local herdsmen and travellers along the busy Baidoa-Mogadishu road.

Armed with their automatic rifles, the troops walk along the dusty streets of Baidoa occasionally speaking to locals who come out to greet and wave to them. AMISOM's



"We have a responsibility to make this town a safe haven for civilians"

Chief of Operations for Sector 3, Colonel Mudomo Alexis says that the Al Shabaab has changed its combat tactic from the face to face gun duels in favour of explosives and has urged the local population to report anything unusual to security personnel.

"Al-Shabaab has adopted a different kind of combat. Instead of waging a classic type of fighting, the militant group has adopted the asymmetric combat strategy of planting Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs)"

In Sector 2 headquartered in Kismayo, Members of the Kenyan Defence Force serving under the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), have recently ended their tour of duty and been replaced by a new battalion who have taken over their daily patrols in and around the key port city. The foot patrols have helped restore relative calm to the country's second largest city.

A contingent of the Sierra Leone military stationed in Kismayo and working alongside the Somali National

Army contributes to these patrols and recently pushed out six kilometres further north, to the village of Gobweyn denying its use by Al-Shabaab as a staging point for the attacks it launches on Kismayo and the neighbouring area.

It is hoped the increase in patrols will continue to secure these key towns and their surrounding areas, while the surge in troops now authorised by the United Nations will enable AMISOM to extend its reach beyond the current areas of operations of its troops.





I have never met that hard man, whose flaming eyes project blazing hatred and anger from beneath his black cimamad. I've never heard him shout 'praise' to Allah in the middle of a heinous terror attack, or seen the gory aftermath. Never physically. Only in pictures. I have lived and worked in Somalia for over 17 months now, and never met the vicious insurgent. Yet his shadow is never too far away.

A pilot in the Ghana Air Force, I was one day summoned to the Headquarters in Accra, informed that the African Union had offered Ghana an air planning position in AMISOM and requested to apply for the position. Three of us applied. I was chosen.

Having grown up in Kenya, the call to serve in Somalia was a wonderful opportunity to return to East Africa after 14 years and contribute to a brave effort to enhance security in a region I had missed. I saw the beginning of this African-led intervention on 6 March 2007 – exactly 50 years after the first of the colonised

African nations (Ghana) became politically independent – as a sign that this mission was a key part of Africa's overall rebirth.

I was to be the first Air Planner at the AMISOM force headquarters and the sole Ghanaian military officer serving with the AU Mission in Somalia. It was such a privilege! 17 months on, my duty tour extended by a year, it and that inspires deep sense of responsibility in me.

I have tried to play that role well, all the while haunted by the fact that friends and loved ones consider me a soldier at

the frontline while, for the most part, I perform what is essentially routine office duty in the safety of the Mogadishu AMISOM base camp. In a rather sad way, this reflects the disparity between the true experience in Somalia and the world's perception. On the other hand, it reminds me that, while they are not as pervasive as the world says, the negatives of this war are real. And that also informs my sense of responsibility towards that AMISOM soldier who truly experiences the frontline – the responsibility to ensure that every aspect of my role is played in a manner that optimises the support available to him or her.

Somalia is not as badly off as people think – there's lots of beauty, grace and good here. Nevertheless that vicious insurgent's shadow, and that of the deep seated inter-clan rivalries that spring to life wherever his Arabic-inscribed black flag is brought down, still linger. Consequently, as my younger brother so aptly puts it; "... you never know where or when next it will go boom!" There is still work to be done, and much patience to be had – at all levels from the politician's to the soldier's. Much as I am not at the front line, I am a soldier: The battle must continue.

I entered the mission as a staff officer to participate in air planning. This involves assigning air support tasks to the mission assets available and scheduling them, then tracking and managing their performance of the tasks.

While my official function is in Air Plans, I have had the honour of being involved in a range of mission activities that transcends the scope of air operations. Perhaps as a result of my quest to acquit myself of guilt associated with the

haunting thought that many people outside Somalia consider me much more than I am, and to somehow justify my inclusion here, I have thrown all my effort into every opportunity made available to me to serve. Consequently I have witnessed the physical development of the Formed Police Unit (FPU) base at Arbiska, visiting several times to deliver presentations on the progress of military operations to the FPU personnel based there as they arrived in waves; I have visited troops at the front line positions in places such as Uruba, Afgoye, Leego Buur Hakaba among other areas. I have seen their expressions – that mix of tiredness and deep determination, and watched them interact touchingly with dirty, yet ever so beautiful Somali children. I have felt that good feeling invoked when those children run alongside our armoured convoys in Mogadishu streets waving enthusiastically, smiling with sincere gratitude.

In a multi-national mission like this one, clashes of culture, doctrine and language limitations often make communication cumbersome. Being the only Ghanaian military officer here, it has also been challenging for me to learn to work with people of differing backgrounds and world-views. While my Kenyan upbringing and limited Swahili (and very limited French) are helpful, I still find it extremely difficult to balance my associations in such a manner as not to be seen to be 'on the other side' whenever international or inter-service rivalries are awakened.

All this notwithstanding, perhaps the most difficult are the personal challenges that arise from being so far away from family for so long. In my 17 month I have visited Ghana 4 times. However, there are phone calls, emails and, best of all there is

Skype, when the network is clear enough to allow efficient video calls. But you cannot hug your crying child or lonely wife on Skype. My only consolation is that I am not the only one who suffers this difficulty. Each one deployed in Somalia as part of AMISOM experiences this to one degree or the other. It is not an easy mission. Yet it is worthwhile.

The Somali people themselves, while ravaged by war and struggling in so many ways as a society, are a source of inspiration. I will never forget my friend Abdul Aziz, who walked up to me one day and offered to dust off my boss' car for 5 dollars. "Atayamo..." he began. I interrupted him: "how did you know my name?!" I exclaimed. He smiled. "You come here yesterday – in uniform. Your name on uniform... Give me 5 dollar – I will clean your car" Abdul Aziz is by my estimation 15 years old. He has lived his whole life in Somalia. That means all he knows is war. He has limited schooling, but from AMISOM soldiers and policemen he has learned English and Swahili and can read the names off military uniforms. His most impressive trait reflects the immense potential of the Somali society – business acumen. Running his little car-dusting business while he helps his elder sister run her shop, Abdul Aziz represents both the debilitating impact war has had on Somalia and the immense potential this nation has for revival. I am truly privileged to be part of this.

I have never seen a real suicide bomber, engaged the enemy sniper or been part of a group that fended off those famous Al Shabaab probing attacks. Someone else stands at the hesco bastion, in the look-out tower and at the gate to keep me isolated from the real war. But I am part of it. I have gone beyond those gates and, even here within them, have seen our wounded soldiers stretched, wheeled or supported limping out of aircraft and into ambulances – headed to facilities where better treatment than they could ever receive at the front lines is available – and felt the satisfaction that comes with knowing I helped coordinate those MEDEVACs. I have even driven an ambulance, ferrying patients from airfield to hospital in the midst of a mass casualty incident. I do not stare that irate insurgent terrorist in the face, but I am here for the man who does, and for Somalia. I am legitimately a part of this: I, too, am a soldier.

Major Kwambena Atiemo an Air Force Pilot and the only Ghanaian Officer serving with the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)

I too am a Soldier



Digitisation of Radio: Mogadishu's 60 year old audio archive



After more than 60 years of analogue storage of Somalia's history in an inadequate environment, the country's only state radio, Radio Mogadishu is digitizing its archive. As Abdirahim Isse Addow, Director of the Radio describes it, "One can say that all the knowledge of former scholars, poets and musicians are archived here".

The radio's dark room archive contains thousands of reels with folk songs, political speeches, drama, poetry and religious programs that were saved

from various clan militias who took control of the city after the ousting of then Somali president Siad Barre in 1991.

Until recently the archive was only recorded on out-dated and unstable analogue audio tapes which were stored in an uncontrolled environment putting the unique historical record at risk.

However, through the digitization of the archive, the material will be re-recorded as digital files that can be safely stored with fail-safe copies as back up. Eight digitization units have been

provided to the library of the radio station and it is supporting two shifts of operators, facilitating more than one hundred hours of digitization work each day.

Each reel can take up to two hours or more to digitize, key-word and file. The recordings have been at risk for more than just the degradation of time. As the country plunged into civil war, there were various attempts to destroy the archives and loot its contents. It was during this time that

Colonel Abshir Hasshi Ali, the then Police Officer who took over as head of Radio Mogadishu's archives in 1991 decided to protect the archives with his life and save Somalia's history. "There were attempts to take the keys from me and once a man came with a grenade and removed the pin," said Ali, the long standing archive manager "but I held on to the man and said we will die together if you try to destroy the archives. So he left without blowing the place up," he recalled

The radio archive was established in 1951 and is estimated to have 35,000 reels in its collection, much of which survived the bombardments of Mogadishu in 1993. Almost all of the foreign language section of the archive was destroyed during this period but the Somali section was not affected.

The archive and radio station was also a target for the Al Qaeda linked group al Shabaab when they controlled Mogadishu. The group banned the listening of music and often-fired mortars into the station to silence it.

The Initiative of digitization is part of the media development operation of the AU/UN Information Support Team, French Government and other International partners. The Ministry of

Information of the Federal Government of Somalia is digitizing the vast archive of tapes to preserve them, and make the recordings available to a modern audience, a generation that do not remember how vibrant Somalia was prior to the war.

Contributing to the digitization process, the French Government has donated sufficient funds to re-furbish the rooms where the digitization will take place and provide some training. A newly prepared building was taken over in the Radio Mogadishu courtyard with air-conditioning, furniture and general refurbishment when the process was transferred to this new location.

At a media presentation to mark the move, the Minister of Information, Post, Telecommunications and Transport (MIPTT) Abdullahi Elmoge Hersi said, "We have always discussed the idea of expediting the digitization and the government is very keen to complete this

task." He explained that while steady progress is being made, the Ministry would welcome the opportunity to expand the number of units so that the work can be completed sooner.

Although the digitization is underway there is a lot of work to be done. Nonetheless, Colonel Ali and his team are up to the task adding that, "our efforts will leave its mark in the history of the country."

"I know that all Somali youth no matter where they are love the arts, they love to listen to music. Most of them like this modern type of music, which is electronic while other people like to listen to the old music. We have both," says Colonel Ali. "So I would like to urge them not to let go of the music and the culture and the identity of the Somalis and also to keep coming up with new works". Adding that "The thought to protect the archives come out of the hope that someday Somalis will be united and be able to appreciate this."

"There were attempts to take the keys from me and once a man came with a grenade and removed the pin..."

Peace is the Ultimate Gift to the People of Somalia

Cpl. John Kirui,
AMISOM/ KDF

I joined the Kenya Defense Forces in the year 2001. After the undergoing the normal training, I became an infantry soldier at the Kenya Defense Forces (KDF). In my early life within the military, I was accustomed to several trainings to ensure I am combat ready. It is part of the life of every soldier to be ready for any eventuality in the quest to safeguard the country against external aggression.

While still based in Kenya, I had heard stories of war from fellow comrades who had been deployed in United Nations Missions in countries like Yugoslavia,

Eritrea, Sierra Leone and Burundi.

When I was selected to be part of AMISOM in April 2013, I felt it was a great honor to serve as a peacekeeper. Basically, as a data analyst, what I do for AMISOM goes a long way in the realization of the overall goal for AMISOM, which is the stabilization of Somalia and bringing peace to and for the people of Somalia.

When you set sail to Somalia from any other country in the world, many thoughts creep into your mind. It does not matter the mode of transport, you will always imagine the sight of

Al Shabaab with their covered faces, chanting with their guns up in the air menacingly. In fact, no good thoughts about Somalia can come to your mind if you are visiting for the first time. My case was no different, having understood the Somali crisis a few years back; I had mixed thoughts when I learnt that I was to visit Mogadishu, not for a week or a month but a total 12 months.

As our flight touched the hard tarmac on the Aden Abdulle International Airport, reality dawned on me that my life in Mogadishu had just begun. It was my first day in Somalia and the first day

in Mogadishu. I was glad that we had arrived safely but I was still anxious about what really awaited us.

The following morning, I stood at a veranda on the second floor of a storied building. From this spot I could see all the planes landing and taking off from the airport as well as the ships waiting to dock at the seaport in the coastal city.

With time, I began to get used to a different picture of Somalia. It was not going to be all war after all, even though the walls of the old buildings are inscribed with bullets; a constant reminder of the hardship that befell Somalia since the ouster of former president Siad Barre in 1991.

Being an analyst in any organization is very demanding. It is a job that requires total commitment and sacrifice since you play a vital role in the eventual decision making process. I wake up quite early, often by 5:00 AM and mostly leave my place of work around 07:30 PM.

All information obtained from various sources must always be processed into polished intelligence to support the operations. This involves collection of the said information, collation or processing, analysis and dissemination as well as generating requirements for any gaps arising from the information. It is a complex process that requires teamwork and that is what we do around the clock.

While analyzing, we integrate, evaluate and analyze available data as well as prepare intelligence products including PowerPoint briefs. Not all information is reliable, so we weigh to ensure reliability, relevance and validity of all information availed. Finished analysis connects the dots by putting information or raw data to context to reach at conclusions and highlight its implications. This becomes vital in joining the dots and understanding the enemy better and therefore enabling the force to disrupt or pre-empt enemy activities.

I rarely get free time but when free, I like reading books on capacity and personal development. I also use my time to exercise occasionally or visit the communication team for AMISOM because in another life, I would be a journalist. I love anything that revolves around information.

Somalia has the longest coastline in Africa and is endowed with massive resources, rivers and a rich culture. The people of Somalia, especially the women, are very industrious mostly dealing with micro-enterprises. When I came to Somalia for the first time I never thought there were areas where people were able to do their work. However, when I later visited Afgoye town, I was surprised to see large scale plantations of banana, citrus and mangoes that made me forget in an instance that I was in Somalia.

Coming to Somalia and making my personal contributions to AMISOM is a great achievement. Having been here for more than eight months, I have witnessed great cooperation amongst the AMISOM troops irrespective of their country of origin, giving all they can in a bid to achieve the overall objective of making peace happen in Somalia. I put a lot of zeal to my work every day knowing that we are headed

“With time, I began to get used to a different picture of Somalia. It was not going to be all war after all, even though the walls of the old buildings are inscribed with bullets...”

the right way. I face my day to day obligations with joy and enthusiasm because I believe in this noble cause.

Being in Somalia has never been without challenges since it entails working far away from my family, but my very beautiful wife and four children are my everyday motivation. I remember my only son was born in my absence, I remember my wife telling me that we are having a son after her visit to the doctor, it did put a warm glow on my cheeks every time my thoughts wondered home. I always hoped I would be there when he was born but when the time came, I was here in Somalia. I was given the great news over the phone and I spent more than a month imagining how he looked like.

This is not a story to many officers and soldiers who wear combat green uniform. Most of them have undergone the same on their tours of duty. I thank God though because our military has mechanisms to ensure our families are safe when we are away. A close comrade drove her to the hospital and was also there to pick her up when she was discharged.

My family has been very supportive and has always urged me on. They understand the nature of our job that says duty calls first but I miss them a lot.

I would love to visit Somalia again soon, not as a peacekeeper but for a vacation with my family. Somalia is a great country and the resolve and resilience of its people is unmatched. This country has seen the worst of time but I am sure by God's grace, it is bound to rise again. Somalia will be one of the greatest countries in East Africa. Peace is the ultimate gift to the Somali people.

Being in Somalia has taught me a lot. I will be going back home with a lot of

lessons and a different man. I believe I will be able to comprehend the essence of peace.

Sometimes when I go back home, my daughters never let me out of their sight. They chat with me inquisitively about Somalia. Even when praying, my youngest daughter forgets I am with them and ends up adding, “I pray that you bless and protect my father and other soldiers in Somalia” in her prayers.

It would be great to be with them but looking at them and thinking about them also makes me remember many kids in Somalia who have lost their parents and relatives to Al Shabaab. It makes me see the need to give my best for the ultimate return of peace to our brothers and sisters of Somalia.

Corporal John Kirui is a Data Analyst serving at AMISOM Force Headquarters in Mogadishu.

Football Comes Home to Somalia



The scenes in the stadium would look familiar anywhere else in the world. Whistles and cheers ring the air as players run from the dugout and on to the pitch. An ice-cream vendor patiently makes his way through the crowd haggling with customers as coaches pace the sidelines impatiently. It's the first day of the NationLink Premier League and for the first time in more than two decades in Somalia, football is a regular fixture.

This year Somalia's national team, The Ocean Stars, participated in the CECAFA Senior Challenge Cup. Despite being knocked out in the early stages, the team was exhilarated about finally appearing on the roster of regional competitions.

Earlier this month, Somalia's President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud reiterated his government's support for football development initiatives. "We recognize football's importance in peace and integration," said President Hassan adding that it was a way to unite the youth in Somalia.

Somalis' love for football cannot be overstated enough. Thousands of Somalis count themselves as loyal fans of English Premier League fans such as Manchester

United and Arsenal FC. But years of incessant conflict and more recently, a short-lived reign of the terror group Al Shabaab meant that watching or playing football was effectively a death dance.

Earlier this year, the Somali Football Federation (SFF) finally completed renovation of the city's oldest stadium, Konis, which was supported by the world's football governing body, FIFA to lay an artificial turf in the stadium.

Following the opening of the stadium, FIFA organized a 5-day training program attended by 30 coaches and more than 300 children in a highlight event making FIFA's return to Somalia for the first time since 1986.

FIFA's representative Coach Ulrich Mathiot was upbeat about football's future in the country. "Now we hope that the Somali Football Federation can have a long time vision or long time program, where they can bring this sort of activity all around the country," said Mathiot.

With the national league underway and the nation's attention fixated on the league standings, Somalis young and old can be seen chatting away in tea shops and bus stops about Elman FC's new striker or Port

FCs New Jersey colours. The uniting force of the beautiful game can be felt across the capital city.

"During the past years, football has become a key tool in our country since it has diverted young Somali people from war involvement, and it has contributed to peace," stated local football trainer, Ali Ahmed.

The challenges for a football loving nation continue to persist with a spate of bombings in the capital city during the November 2013 launch of the first division games at the newly refurbished Konis Stadium. However, players and supporters were undeterred and the game was met with applause, cheers and the sounds of laughter.

The future for football in Somalia brings new hopes and dreams for those in charge. Talks of a plan to reach the African Cup of Nations in Morocco 2015 and World Cup Finals in Russia 2018 echo the halls of the Somali Football Federation. These may appear to be the words of a dreamer but, with a renewed vision for stability and security in Somalia, Football steers the country away from internal conflict to an outward display of national pride and unity.



"During the past years, football has become a key tool in our country since it has diverted young Somali people from war involvement, and it has contributed to peace"



2013 A YEAR IN REVIEW



JANUARY

- January 4th Amnesty International raises concern on increasing rape cases in internally displaced camps
- January 5th Somali National Forces fend off an Al Shabaab ambush in Luuq, killing 23 insurgents.
- January 9th Somali president Hassan Sheikh Mohamud invites Somali refugees to return home.
- January 11th Al Shabaab executes French intelligence Agent Denis Alex who was held since 2009 following a botched rescue attempt by French Special Forces in Bulomarer, a rebel-controlled town south of the Somali capital, Mogadishu.
- January 18th Shabelle producer Abdihiared Osman Aden shot and killed while walking to work. He was the first Somali journalist killed in 2013.

FEBRUARY

- Feb 18-22nd AMISOM and SNA capture Aw Dheegle, Janaale and Barriire in Lower Shabelle and the Jowhar airfield in Middle Shabelle from Al-Shabaab.
- Feb 22nd More than 20 countries deploy envoys to the Somalia in five months following the end of internal strife in the country.
- Feb 25th The Somali National Army supported by AMISOM capture the towns of Dardan and Jiirada-Kuullow in the Bay region.
- Feb 28th Somalia makes first livestock exports in 22 years as it continues its recovery from decades of internal conflict.

MARCH

- March 6th The United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 2093 extending the authorization of AMISOM until 28th February 2014.
- March 6th The United Nations Security Council authorizes a partial lifting of the arms embargo for a period of 12 months for weapons solely intended for the Somali National Security Forces.
- March 15th - 22nd Ethiopian forces pull out of Hudur in Bakool Region and Militant group Al Shabaab regained of the town.

APRIL

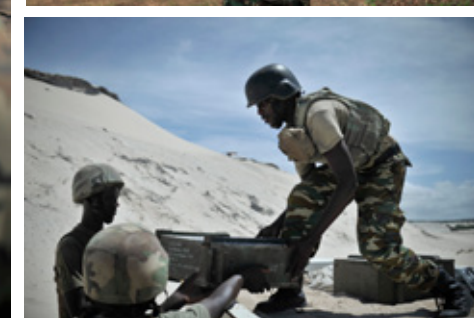
- April 2nd Somali government forces with the support of African Union Troops successfully completed the last leg of their 241 kms advance from Mogadishu to Baidoa. This route opens up this key supply route and allows for the provision of humanitarian aid.
- April 3rd Sierra Leone Troops deploy to Somalia. Sierra Leoneans constitute AMISOM's fifth contingent, after Burundian, Djiboutian, Kenyan and Ugandan contingents.
- April 9th President Barack Obama clears way for US to provide military assistance to following partial lifting of arms embargo on Somalia.
- April 12th Somali National Army celebrates 53rd anniversary of its formation.
- April 19th Somali Cabinet approves draft of anti-terrorism law.
- April 30th Nicholas Kay is appointed as the United Nations Secretary General's Special Representative for Somalia, replacing Augustine Mahiga.

MAY

- May 2nd The UN Security Council adopts resolution 2102, creating the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM).
- May 23rd The African Union marks 50 years since its founding. Celebrations conducted in Mogadishu and Addis Ababa.
- May 27th Somali National Army supported by AMISOM capture Mubarak, Ugunji, Nuun and Furuqley in the Qoryooley and Awdinley districts of the Lower Shabelle region from Al Shabaab.

JUNE

- June 10th Prime Minister Abdi Farah Shirdon welcomes foreign investment law as a business-friendly step in the right direction and says Somalia is ready to do business with the world.
- June 11th Somalia Bids Farewell to United Nation Political Office for Somalia and Ambassador Augustine Mahiga.
- June 19th Al Shabaab fighters attack UN compound based outside the AMISOM compound in Mogadishu.



JULY

- 1st July Hassan Dahir Aweys, one of Al Shabaab's key leaders surrenders to the Somali government.
- 1st July Somalia celebrates 53rd independence anniversary.
- July 16th Ethiopian forces vacate Baidoa in the southern region of Bay.

AUGUST

- August 28th Somali president Hassan Sheikh Mohamud creates National Security Council. The council becomes the highest body tasked with policy and strategy of the national security.
- August 28th Agreement between Somali government and Ras Kamboni delegation creates Interim Jubba Administration. The agreement was signed in Addis Ababa

SEPTEMBER

- 17th Sept International donors promise 2.4 billion dollars in reconstruction aid in a three-year "New Deal" to strengthen the economy and security.

OCTOBER

- October 1st Kenyan MPs demand closure of Somali refugee camps.
- October 5th U.S. Navy SEALs abandon an overnight raid on the Somali seaside home in Baraawe of an Al-Shabaab leader,
- October 26th Members from the African Union's Peace and Security Council visit Mogadishu to meet with President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud.

NOVEMBER

- Nov 6th British court prevents Barclays bank from cutting off service to the Somali money transfer company Dahabshiil.
- Nov 11th Somali refugees' voluntary repatriation process from Kenya begins.
- Nov 12th Hundreds feared dead as heavy tropical cyclone storm hits Puntland.
- Nov 12th UN Security Council approves 4,000 troops boost to AMISOM.
- Nov 19th Al Shaabab Target Police Station in Beledweyne killing 16 people
- Nov 25th Somali Government unveils 2014 budget proposal.
- Nov 27th Maj Gen Geoffrey Baraba Muheesi from Uganda is appointed Deputy Force Commander in-charge of operations and Planning for AMISOM and Maj. General Francis K. Nthenge appointed as Deputy Force Commander Support.
- Nov 28th Cabinet approves the appointment of Bashir Isse Ali as interim Central Bank Governor.
- November 30th AMISOM and the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia closed the first Somalia specific United Nations Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination (UN-CMCoord) Course

DECEMBER

- Dec 2nd Prime Minister Abdi Farah Shirdon is voted out of office just over a year after assuming post.
- Dec 5th AMISOM and Stakeholders conclude a four-day Gender Workshop on Strengthening Somalia's judicial Capacity to address Gender Based Violence
- Dec 12th Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed is appointed new Somalia Prime Minister.
- Dec 16th Burundi's Lt. Gen Silas Ntigurirwa takes office as the AMISOM Force Commander, taking over from Lt. Gen Andrew Gutti of Uganda. Handover ceremony takes place in Mogadishu.
- Dec 16th Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) appoints Ambassador Mohamed Abdi Affey as new envoy to Somalia.

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