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(S//REL) Somalia: Instability Creates Opportunity Against Counterterrorism Targets

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(S//REL) Ethiopian invasion of Somalia plays to the advantage of US counterterrorism forces; two key al-Qa'ida figures in the region are killed or captured.

(U//FOUO) Great changes have occurred in Somalia in the last 9 months, but the country may be no closer to stability than ever. However, the chaos has yielded opportunities for progress in the war on terrorism.

Somalia

(TS//SI//REL) Ethiopia invaded Somalia in December 2006 to drive out the Council of Islamic Courts (CIC), a fundamentalist organization that had seized control of Mogadishu in June. The CIC had been harboring members of the al-Qa'ida East Africa Cell who were responsible for the bombing of the U.S. Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998. Ethiopia easily defeated the CIC and its leaders fled to the Kenya border area, along with the al-Qa'ida cell members.

(TS//SI//REL) The Counterterrorism Product Line's (S2I) African Threat Branch has been following these targets since 2003, and immediately ramped up to capitalize on this opportunity. They provided 24-hour support to CIA and US military units in the Horn of Africa. They tracked the VOICESAIL handsets used by various CIC leaders, and worked with the GEOCELL to provide round-the-clock tippers to the intelligence fusion cell in Nairobi. They also followed DNI (Digital Network Intelligence) activity and provided minute-by-minute tippers to the field. Language support came from the RODEHOUSE* contract language facility and the Regional Targets Product Line. Intelligence was also shared with the Ethiopian SIGINT partner to enable their troops to track the High Value Individuals (HVI's).

(TS//SI//REL) ***S2I's efforts paid off handsomely:*** the #1 individual on the list was believed killed in early January, and another target was arrested in Kenya in February. This success was not due merely to luck or timing; the dedicated work of many people over several years laid the groundwork to make this success possible. The effort will continue to find and capture the remaining members of the al-Qa'ida East Africa cell.

(U//FOUO) Despite the defeat of the Islamic Courts, Somalia's problems are far from over. Somalia has had no functioning government for the last 16 years. The latest transitional government has been unable to assert control of the country in its two years of existence. Islamic fighters intend to regroup and are expected to begin an insurgency campaign to win power. The African Union has announced a peacekeeping operation, but few countries have volunteered to provide troops. The future prospects for stability in Somalia remain low.

(U) Children play on the rubble of the former Somalia parliament building in the capital Mogadishu, February 12, 2007. (Reuters)

(U) Notes:
* (U//FOUO) For background on RODEHOUSE, see a related article, part 1 and part 2.

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