

This Article was written in 2022, with data going through August 2022. Over two years later, the United States remains in Somalia with renewed commitments, including constructing new bases for U.S.-funded Somali forces and maintaining nearly 500 troops.¹ In 2023, the United States conducted dozens more airstrikes² and has not slowed down in 2024.³ International intervention in Somalia—backed by the United States—was also recently reenergized. Just this month, UNSC also authorized an extension of the African Union peacekeeping mission, deploying thousands more personnel.⁴ These violent, disjointed foreign campaigns into Somalia continue.⁵

Evidently, as far as “stopping terrorism” goes, U.S. efforts have been an abject failure.⁶ Yet the United States seems as insistent as ever to asserting itself in the region. Now claiming fears of al Shabaab-Houthi collaboration, the United States has reiterated that its presence in Somalia aims to protect its interests in the Red Sea and Horn of Africa generally.⁷ Some U.S. officials have gone as far as to baselessly claim Iran is now collaborating with al-Shabaab.⁸ The United States clearly has embraced another two years of irregular

¹ See Africa News, “US to build 5 new military bases for Somali army, which faces a rebellion by an extremist group,” 16.02.2024, <https://www.africanews.com/2024/02/16/us-to-build-5-new-military-bases-for-somali-army-which-faces-a-rebellion-by-an-extremist-g/>; Samar al-Bulushi & Ahmed Ibrahim, “US inks deal to build up to 5 bases in Somalia,” Responsible Statecraft, 21.02.2024, <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/us-base-somalia/>.

² See Jason C. Mueller, “Despite one of the US military’s greatest fiascoes, American troops are still in Somalia fighting an endless war,” The Conversation, 04.10.2023, <https://theconversation.com/despite-one-of-the-us-militarys-greatest-fiascoes-american-troops-are-still-in-somalia-fighting-an-endless-war-206368>; AFRICOM, “2023 Airstrikes,” <https://www.africom.mil/what-we-do/airstrikes/2023-airstrikes>; Airwars, “US Forces in Somalia,” https://airwars.org/civilian-casualties/?start_date=2023-01-01&belligerent=us-forces&country=somalia&type_of_strike=airstrike.

³ See Airwars, *supra* note 2; Bill Roggio & Caleb Weiss, “US Launches First Drone Strike of the Year in Somalia,” Long War Journal, 23.01.2024, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2024/01/us-launches-first-drone-strike-of-the-year-in-somalia.php>; Oren Liebermann & Hamdi Alkhshali, “US assessing whether air strike against al-Shabaab in Somalia killed two Cuban doctors held by group,” CNN, 06.02.2024, <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/02/19/politics/us-air-strike-somalia-assessing-cuban-doctors/index.html> (noting how in one of these strikes, the United States likely killed civilian hostages). This CNN article echoes the U.S. government line: “The US considers al-Shabaab the largest al-Qaeda network in the world and one of the strongest, with the capability to attack US forces and US interests.”

⁴ Edith M. Lederer, “UN takes key steps toward Somalia’s takeover of its own security,” ABC News, 16.08.2024, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/takes-key-steps-somalias-takeover-security-112882764>.

⁵ Nick Turse, “Who Could Have Predicted the War in Somalia Would Fail? The Pentagon,” Intercept, 07.03.2024, <https://theintercept.com/2024/03/07/pentagon-somalia-africa-terrorism-failure/> (“There is no useful, shared conception of the conflict,” says the Pentagon study, which was obtained via the Freedom of Information Act and has not previously been made public.”).

⁶ See *id.*; Mueller, *supra* note 2 (“U.S. efforts to develop political stability and eliminate terrorism have achieved the very opposite and not brought an end to political violence”). Whether these were the goals of U.S. efforts are, as I have explained in the article, dubious at best.

⁷ See Katie Bo Lillis et al., “US intelligence assesses Houthis in Yemen in talks to provide weapons to al-Shabaab in Somalia, officials say,” CNN, 11.06.2024, <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/06/11/politics/us-intelligence-houthis-al-shabaab/index.html>. “But they are separated by only a single body of water — the strategically significant Gulf of Aden — and they both count the United States as a top enemy. The intelligence raises the alarming possibility that a marriage of convenience could make things worse both in Somalia and in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, where the Houthis have launched regular attacks on commercial shipping and US military assets since the war in Gaza began.” See also Ambassador Robert Wood, “Remarks at a UN Security Council Briefing on Somalia,” 24.06.2024, <https://usun.usmission.gov/remarks-at-a-un-security-council-briefing-on-somalia-11/> (speaking of “shared security interests” between the United States and Somalia).

⁸ See Lillis, *supra* note 7. “One major question for US intelligence officials is the degree of involvement Iran might have in the arrangement. There is no direct evidence yet, officials said, but the US is still looking. It fits the pattern

military activities in Somalia to perpetuate its influence in the region. These actions can only be understood as a project of global military imperialism—this is not a counterterrorism mission ‘gone wrong.’ U.S. intervention in Somalia has been opaque and intentionally enduring. Pointing out the illegality of specific actions is unlikely to restrain U.S. interference, which requires broader calls to end this unjustifiable, self-interested campaign.⁹

of broader Iranian efforts to widen the front against the US and the west by directly or indirectly providing arms to proxy groups.”

⁹ *See, e.g.*, Jason C. Mueller, “Does the U.S. Owe Reparations to Somalia?” *Race & Class* (2023),