



PRESS RELEASE

African Union Mission in Somalia and Transitional Federal Government Forces Contain Extremist Threat to Humanitarian Operations in Mogadishu

Mogadishu, 28 July 2011: African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of Somalia forces have this morning, 28 July 2011, mounted highly targeted security operations to contain and remove the threat of continued Al Shabaab attacks along the front line and increase security for IDP Camps in TFG controlled areas of Mogadishu.

This limited and pinpoint offensive has resulted in the capture of the strategically important positions of Florenza, Sinai and Monopolio Junctions in north east Mogadishu. During the course of the operation 41 civilian hostages being held by Al Shabaab were able to escape to TFG controlled territory.

AMISOM Force Spokesman, Lt Col Paddy Ankunda, said: "Following a period of sustained provocation from Al Shabaab, our troops have dealt with specific security threats in a short tactical offensive operation. This action will further increase security in the TFG controlled areas of Mogadishu and ensure that aid agencies can continue to operate and get vital supplies to internally displaced persons.

AMISOM fully understands the need to restrain military operations while the aid agencies mount their humanitarian campaign. However, we are here to maintain stability in Mogadishu, and if we perceive a threat from the extremist insurgents, then it is our duty to protect and defend the most vulnerable from this threat."

"We can reassure the humanitarian community that they can continue to operate in relative safety, and that we will keep them informed of any necessary future operations while we work with them to limit the impact on their lifesaving activities."

The most recent extremist attack on AMISOM troops occurred two nights ago (26 July) when Al Shabaab fighters targeted a Burundian-held position in African Village, central Mogadishu, with small arms fire, rocket propelled grenades and mortars.

African Village is situated 4km from Badbado IDP Camp, where thousands of civilians have gathered to receive emergency aid.

Lt Col Ankunda, said: "We are concerned about the extremists' reckless attacks given the humanitarian activities being carried out presently. Despite their earlier decision to allow agencies to deliver aid to famine victims, the Al Shabaab has already denied hundreds of thousands of Somalis access to food aid, telling them instead to go back to their areas. We fear that they may attack internally displaced persons in Mogadishu, who are still in range of Al Shabaab mortars and indirect fire."

Since AMISOM deployed to Mogadishu in 2007, Al Shabaab has launched major offensives every year during the Ramadan period. Intelligence reveals that over the past month the organization has been bringing additional fighters into Mogadishu and attacks on AMISOM positions are likely to increase.