

AFRICAN UNION

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African Union Mission for Somalia

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## PRESS RELEASE

*(for immediate release)*

### ***African Union Troops secure the strategic coastal town of Elma'an***

***Mogadishu-June 22nd, 2012:*** The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has secured Elma'an Port and Esaley Airstrip in Middle Shabelle region from Al-Shabaab terrorists adding to the list of strategic locations the Al-Qaeda linked group continues to lose as AMISOM supports the Somali National Army (SNA) to pacify the country.

Esaley Airstrip and Elma'an Port, both over 37kms northeast of Mogadishu, were used by Al-Shabaab terrorists to import illegal arms and shuttle foreign fighters from the Gulf of Eden into Somalia. In 2006, Al-Shabaab banned humanitarian groups from using Esaley Airstrip thereby restricting humanitarian access to populations in Middle Shabelle, Southern Somalia.

"The successful offensive, launched by our forces, has enabled us to secure an extremely strategic entrance to Mogadishu. Since the increase of the authorised troop strength to 17731 , AMISOM forces have been re-energized for the greater task ahead of bringing peace and stability to the rest of Somalia." Said AMISOM Force Commander Lieutenant General Andrew Gutti.

Securing the two towns will curb Al-Shabaab's recent retreat from the Afgooye corridor to key towns on the Somali coastal line. During the operation, AMISOM and SNA forces seized heavy weaponry including 9 rifles and a machine gun.

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