

SOMALIA

WHAT HAPPENED IN JANUARY?

Government operations against Al-Shabaab **shifted to Galmudug state**, even as the militants attacked positions recovered by the government elsewhere. Puntland state announced it is suspending most ties with the federal government.

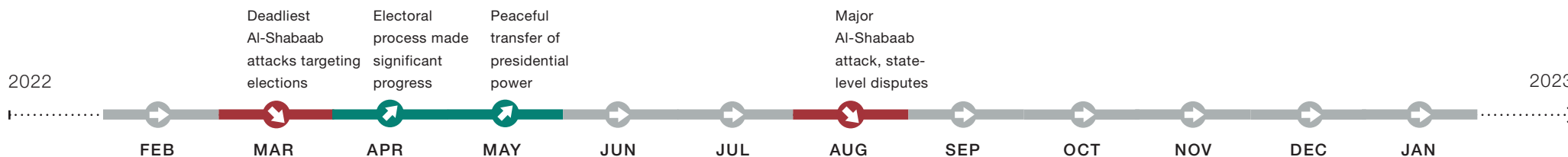
WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Galmudug represents a **new phase** for the government's offensive, which is pushing Al-Shabaab away from the coast, but militants' attacks elsewhere show they can still challenge government-controlled territory. Puntland's announcement undercuts Mogadishu's efforts to improve relations with member states.

DECEMBER TRENDS

The federal government's offensive against Al-Shabaab **made significant progress**, notably in Hirshabelle state. A dispute over the extension of the South West state president's term turned violent. Puntland state refused to sign a joint communiqué between Mogadishu and member states.

TRENDS TIMELINE



1 Military made major advances in Galmudug

In Galmudug state, government forces made progress on two fronts, capturing the key towns of Xarardheere (16 January) and Ceel Dheere (17 January). The military, with local clan militias, mounted subsequent operations to secure the environs.

These advances mark an **expansion of the offensive against Al-Shabaab**, while the capture of Xarardheere, a strategic location near the coastline, is a significant milestone. The government is apparently trying to **push the militants further inland and surround them** in their remaining strongholds in Galmudug.

2 Al-Shabaab militants attacked recovered areas notably in Hirshabelle

Even as Al-Shabaab loses territorial control, it **continues to attack government positions**. Militants launched **at least twelve suicide car bombs** in Hirshabelle state and elsewhere in central Somalia in January, including in Mahas (4 January), Hilowe-Gaab (6 January), Jalalaqsi and Buloburte (both 14 January), Halgan (16 January), Xawadley and Galcad (both 17 January). The latter was particularly deadly, with both sides claiming over 100 killed.

In Mogadishu, Al-Shabaab stormed the Banadir regional office on 22 January, killing a dozen.

3 Puntland suspended ties with Mogadishu

The **Puntland administration** on 9 January declared it will henceforth **function autonomously**, cooperating with Mogadishu only on humanitarian affairs until the Somali provisional constitution is finalised. The announcement follows Puntland's rejection of a communiqué between the government and member states in late December. Puntland claims Mogadishu seeks to centralise powers.

Despite several meetings in recent months, President Mohamud and Puntland's leadership have been unable to overcome divisions. The announcement is a **setback for efforts to improve centre-periphery ties** in Somalia.

WHAT TO WATCH

The government seeks to **continue operations in Galmudug**, while **consolidating its hold in Hirshabelle** and warding off Al-Shabaab attacks. It will likely focus attention on community reconciliation in Somalia's southern Jubaland and South West states as a precursor to operations there, while advocating regional leadership to do more to prepare the ground.

The government may seek to quietly **ease tensions with Puntland**, as it has not publicly reacted to its announcement to date.

