



SOMALIA

WHAT HAPPENED IN FEBRUARY?

The government and clan militia offensive against Al-Shabaab **faced resistance** in centrally-located Hirshabelle and Galmudug states, but a **new front opened** further south in Jubaland state. Meanwhile, political elites in South West state agreed on a **plan to de-escalate tensions**.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The expansion of operations to Jubaland moves the fight against Al-Shabaab **closer to the group's strongholds** in Middle Juba region. The reconciliation conference in South West could be a **prelude to starting anti-Al-Shabaab operations** there.

JANUARY TRENDS

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

1 📉 Anti-Al-Shabaab offensive faced resistance in central states

In Galmudug state, government forces focused on **clearing rural areas**, particularly between Xaradheere and Bacadweyne towns in Mudug region – taking back Doonlaye, Shabellow and Qeycad towns between 10 and 14 February.

In Hirshabelle state, government forces began pushing **westward across Shabelle river**, recovering Shaw village on 23 February. Al-Shabaab continued to **put up significant resistance**, targeting the government-allied Macawisley clan militias near Afcad village in Hiraan region and Eji village in Middle Shabelle region in mid-February.

2 📈 Operations against Al-Shabaab kicked off in Jubaland state

The **first stage of the government offensive in Jubaland** focused on clearing the road linking state capital Kismayo to Afmadow town. Militants attempted to stymie operations, attacking Afmadow with vehicle-borne explosives on 11 February and temporarily taking control of Bar Sanguni village on 16 February.

Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti on 1 February vowed to support Somalia's offensive against Al-Shabaab during a summit in the capital, Mogadishu.

3 📈 Political tensions subsided in South West state

A conference among South West state's political elites concluded on 3 February in the administrative capital Baidoa. Parties **agreed to reconcile** following late December clashes between state government and opposition forces. The opposition also accepted South West state President Abdiiaziz Lafta-Gareen's one-year term extension, with a state-level presidential election to be held in January 2024.

President Mohamud attended the closing ceremony, stressing the **need to resolve political tensions** in order to maintain pressure on Al-Shabaab.

WHAT TO WATCH

The federal government will hold **another national consultative conference in mid-March**. Term extensions for state governments are expected to be on the agenda, amid speculation that the federal parliament also seeks to add one year to its term.

Phase II of the offensive against Al-Shabaab, concentrating on Jubaland and South West states, may **pick up pace**. Mogadishu seeks to **regain momentum against the group**, including by turning to Kenyan and Ethiopian forces.



TRENDS TIMELINE

