

Armed Conflict

25

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Somalia Alert: Government reinforces troops across Mogadishu overnight on April 24-25 as contingent of opposition forces enters city

Please be advised

- Sources indicate that government troops were reinforced across Mogadishu overnight on April 24-25 amid reports that a contingent of Somali National Army (SNA) troops opposed to President Mohamed Abudllahi Farmajo's two-year term extension left their bases in Middle Shabelle Region to secure opposition elements in the capital.
- SNA troops with armored vehicles were reportedly deployed to block the city's entrances, along major roads leading to Villa Somalia, and at other strategic locations including Daljirka Dahsoon Junction.
- Some unconfirmed reports citing locals claim that there were no unusual military movements overnight in Mogadishu and that the city remained calm during the morning hours of April 25.
- Separate sources indicate that several hundred Middle Shabelle troops have arrived in Mogadishu's eastern Karan District with approximately 100 armored vehicles on April 25, and have seized Fagah Junction. The force commanders are reportedly slated to hold a press conference in the coming hours to declare their position.
- President Farmajo has reportedly appointed Hirshabelle State President Ali Hussein Guudlawe to negotiate with the Middle Shabelle forces on his behalf after talks between SNA Chief General Odowa Yusuf Rage and Middle Shabelle Commander Saney Abdulle broke down.



Assessments & Forecast

1. Tensions have been high in Mogadishu for several days as the government continues to move ahead with President Farmajo's illegitimate [two-year term extension](#) despite domestic and international backlash. These latest developments are poised to exacerbate the situation and intensify security risks on the ground in Mogadishu. Given that the reinforcement of SNA troops allied with Farmajo in recent days has been perceived as a threat to opposition presidential candidates, security officials, and leaders of certain clans like the Hawiye residing in the city, the arrival of Middle Shabelle forces in Mogadishu is likely intended to secure such individuals in the event that political tensions erupt into armed conflict. That being said, clashes between SNA Farmajo loyalists and the Middle Shabelle forces have likely yet to manifest as their arrival in Mogadishu is mostly a preventative measure at this stage and intended to demonstrate the extent of armed support for the opposition camp. This further explains why the Middle Shabelle commander has consented to meet with General Odawa and intends to give a press conference before any armed actions are taken.
2. Furthermore, it is possible that clashes have been held off as Hirshabelle President Guudlawe works to negotiate with Middle Shabelle troops and their clan leaders. **FORECAST:** With opposition demands centered around the repeal of Farmajo's term extension and his resignation, as well as the drawdown of SNA reinforcements in Mogadishu who pose a threat to civilians and opposition leaders, negotiators are likely to struggle to reach a settlement. With tensions rapidly escalating in Mogadishu, the slated press conference by Middle Shabelle force commanders could reveal the outcome of negotiations, and in turn, trigger violence between the parties or SNA operations to dislodge Middle Shabelle troops from Karan District. Given that both sides are heavily armed with armored vehicles posted along major routes and at strategic locations throughout the city, the violence would likely paralyze movement throughout Mogadishu and leave civilians particularly vulnerable.
3. **FORECAST:** Given the fragile security situation in Mogadishu, in addition to African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) forces who are actively guarding strategic locations, the government will likely reinforce pro-Farmajo troops in the vicinity of Villa Somalia, Aden Adde International Airport, near the port, and in neighborhoods dominated by government supporters. In this context, any

unexpected movements by Middle Shabelle forces, or those allied to other opposition figures like former Mogadishu Police Commissioner Sadak John, will likely be quickly countered, which could trigger clashes as well.

4. **FORECAST:** In the event that negotiations fail and clashes begin in the coming hours, strategic areas could also be targeted by opposition forces or opportunistic al-Shabaab militants despite AMISOM's presence. This could trigger a response from AMISOM such as independent operations to reinforce security in the city. Given the importance of these locations, international partners may attempt to intervene in negotiations between the government and Middle Shabelle forces to defuse the situation. However, given precedent, international pressure will likely only have a limited impact on negotiations, and thus, the political and security landscape in Mogadishu is expected to remain extremely volatile over the coming hours and days.

Recommendations

1. We advise against all travel to Somalia with the exception of the Somaliland region and the Puntland cities of Bosaso, Garowe, and Galkayo North due to the threat of militancy, inter-clan violence, and crime.
2. If travel to Mogadishu is unavoidable, we advise remaining in the confines of the Aden Adde International Airport complex.
3. We advise to exercise vigilance and adhere to stringent security precautions in Hargeisa and Berbera, while avoiding nonessential travel to the outlying areas of Somaliland due to the risks of crime.