



# ATMIS

Supporting a Somali-led  
Peace and Security Process



ATMIS | KENCON - XII





**EDITORIAL TEAM**

- Maj Rashid Lugogo
- Capt Joseph Njoroge
- Capt Evans Werungah
- Wo1 Protus Ilavaza

**PHOTOGRAPHY**

- Sgt Vincent Getubo
- Sgt Sarah Mwendu
- Sgt Linda Oking'o
- Cpl Doreen Kathure

**Our Contacts**

**Email:** atmismediacentre@gmail.com

**P.O. Box:** 20182 – 00200, Nairobi, Kenya

**Phone:** +254 202 713 755 /56 /58

**Fax:** +254 202 713 766

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**Social Media**

atmis.somalia

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# MESSAGE FROM THE SECTOR COMMANDER

## STRENGTHENING COMMAND AND CONTROL STRUCTURES OF THE SOMALI SECURITY FORCES

Brig William Kamoiro 'OGW' 'ndc' (K) 'psc' (K)



In line with the ATMIS mandate, this time as Commander of Sector II in the mission operational area and having previously served as the Commanding Officer of amphibious sea operations during the capture of Kismayo from Al-Shabaab under AMISOM, the desire to witness Somali security independence was aligned with the mission objectives of transferring security responsibilities from ATMIS to Somali Security Forces (SSF). This transfer will mark a critical milestone in Somalia's path towards sustainable peace and stability.

A well-defined command and control

structure is crucial for the smooth transition of security responsibilities. This includes establishing clear lines of authority and communication channels for responding to attacks, coordination mechanisms between different security units, and enabling effective decision-making, resource allocation, and operational coordination in dealing with the enemy. Regular joint exercises involving both ATMIS and the Somali Security Forces help build interoperability between different security agencies.

Leading to Somali self-security

governance.

During my tenure as the ATMIS Sector II Commander over the last one year, the need and passion to support the command and control of the SSF was at the core of my tour of duty. Together with the KDF ATMIS troops under my command, we engaged in various robust training and capacity-building activities for the Somali security forces. These activities focused on counter-terrorism approaches, intelligence gathering, peace negotiations, and civilian medical training as catalysts for self-security governance.

To expand our intelligence collection capabilities and outsmart the enemy, KDF troops in Sector II engaged with the local Somali communities in various ways, including sporting activities, Female Engagement Teams (FET), and CIMIC activities. These engagements yielded profound results, including effective intelligence gathering and information sharing mechanisms, crucial in combating security threats. Through these initiatives, the Somali Security Forces (SSF) have gained a better understanding of the security landscape, identified potential threats, and taken timely preventive actions.

The involvement and support of the local communities in Jubaland State was integral to the success of the 12th Kenyan contingent. Key Leadership Engagement (KLE) meetings with community leaders, analysis of security situations, engagement with civil society organizations, and grassroots stakeholders helped foster trust, thereby enabling security operations. These efforts have promoted cooperation and enhanced the legitimacy of the Somali Security Forces.



ATMIS Sector Two Commander Brig William Kamoiro engaging with Somali National Army soldiers during a visit to JISA camp in March 2023

Additionally, KDF troops facilitated and created an enabling environment for negotiations in parts of Gedo region. This did not only bring about peace but also educated the Burahache communities of the immense possibilities of resolving conflicts/ disagreements through dialogue.

The expansion of Dhobley airstrip in a bid to ease air transport in Jubba valley and improve trade and socio-economic wellbeing of the civilian populations around Dhobley town by the KDF Engineers was critical in opening up the transport corridor in Lower Jubba, often affected during the rainy seasons. It is a testimony of the contribution of our

troops to infrastructural development in the region.

Furthermore, with a constant focus on the goal, KDF troops have enhanced joint patrols along the main supply routes in the Jubba Valley, starting from Gedo region (Burahache and Gherille) to Liboi, Dhobley, Tabda, Afamadhow, and extending to the Kismayo regions.

Both ATMIS troops and Somali security forces covered the most vulnerable areas, pacifying Jubaland State as a whole. These patrols provided a platform for ATMIS troops to train and mentor the SSF, thereby improving their skills and capabilities while at the same time promoting humanitarian and civilian protection activities.

Throughout the joint patrols, the troops have addressed socioeconomic issues, fostering cooperation between the security forces and local communities. The main supply routes have facilitated the transportation of essential equipment and supplies to different Somali security units.

The ultimate goal of the strengthened SSF command and control structures is to empower the SSF to independently address security challenges, promote stability and create a safe environment for the people of Somalia.

# SOMALIA'S PATH TO STABILITY:

## Mentoring for Enhanced Security Responsibility

By Col Safe Adan Safe 'psc' (IND)- Deputy Sector Commander



Looking back to October 2011, when KDF crossed the border and deployed in Somalia under Operation Linda Nchi, the Horn of African nation has made significant strides towards achieving peace and stability after decades of conflict and insecurity.

The reconfiguration of AMISOM to ATMIS, reflecting on the transition matrix, has been crucial to this progress. Central to these achievements has been the mentoring and training provided to Somali Security Forces (SSF) by ATMIS KDF troops. These initiatives aim to empower and equip local forces to gradually assume security responsibilities from ATMIS and international actors.

As the Deputy Commander of Sector II, this article explores the importance of mentoring programs and their role in building the capacity and capability of Somali security forces, ultimately paving the way for a safer environment and more governable self-reliant Somalia.

For many years, Somalia has faced multifaceted security challenges, including the presence of extremist groups, piracy, and inter-clan conflicts creating ungovernable spaces where the Al-Shabaab and other Armed Groups (AGS) flourish through chaos and anarchy.

The fragile state of security necessitated the development of the capacity and capability of their security units, which called for mentorship programs from Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) and other international actors in the theatre of operation.

The ATMIS mission has played a critical role in stabilizing the country. However, the long-term solution lies

in mentoring, enabling the Somali security forces to take charge of their own security affairs.

As KDF ATMIS troops in Sector II and all the other Forward Operating Bases (FOBs), we are focused largely on one of the key ATMIS mandates-mentoring the Security Forces.

This involves consistent training in patrolling skills, weaponry, manning of the observation post, mounting roadblocks, tactical combat casualty care, intelligence gathering to counter enemy forces, and other essential skills.

Firstly, why mentor Somali security forces? Mentoring programs have emerged as an effective approach to transfer knowledge, build capacity, and enhance the skills of Somali security forces.

Through pairing experienced KDF troops as mentors with their local counterparts, these programs promote institutional learning, professionalism, and accountability. They facilitate the

transfer of best practices, operational strategies, and technical expertise, empowering local forces to address security challenges effectively.

During our ATMIS tenure, the SSF greatly benefited from mentoring programs that facilitated the transfer of specialized knowledge and skills. KDF troops provided guidance on a wide range of topics, including intelligence gathering using UAVs, community engagement through CIMIC activities, and mentorship programs on countering terrorism.

Through continuous mentoring, local forces gained the expertise needed to address security threats with precision and professionalism.

As ATMIS troops, we prioritized effective mentoring beyond standard operating procedures and accountability mechanisms. We instilled a culture of professionalism, discipline, and respect for human rights in their operations.

Furthermore, as ATMIS KDF troops,

we incorporated broader initiatives to promote good governance among Somali security leadership, supported infrastructure development and social cohesion. These factors are integral to sustainable security.

Mentoring programs have played a pivotal role in strengthening Somali security forces, enabling them to assume greater responsibility in securing their nation. By transferring knowledge, skills, and expertise, mentoring initiatives have contributed to enhanced operational capabilities, professionalism, and institutional strength.

As Somalia progresses on its path to stability, sustained investment in mentoring programs, coupled with broader development efforts, will be vital in securing the country's aspirations for self-governance and sovereignty and at the same time maintaining regional and global security.



ATMIS Sector Two Deputy Commander Col Safe Adan Safe alongside KDF troops donate assorted food items to Dhobley Families in April 2023.

# ASYMMETRIC WARFARE CHANGE OF TACT IN COMBATING AL-SHABAAB

By Col Wilson Lemayan 'psc' (K)



The Al Shabaab has adopted a range of Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTP) to bolster its asymmetric warfare in Somalia. These TTPs deployed across the theatres of operation in Somalia include enablers as well as kinetics. The enablers include deception, drone surveillance, Info Ops, KLE, extortion, conscription, Socio-welfare services, while the kinetics comprise IEDs, IDF, snipers, lone wolves, grenades, assassinations, abductions, and guns for hire.

Consequently, there has been an escalation in Al Shabaab revenge attacks characterized by IEDs, VBIEDs and IDF and sabotage attacks against private property and public utilities such as social amenities (water points, bridges, malls) and animals.

Al-Shabaab has deployed these TTPs to devastating effect, presenting a

challenge in defeating them. This is attributed to the dynamic operating environment where the enemy is not defined.

The strategy of over-reliance on conventional military tactics, suggesting a more aggressive, unconventional approach targeting Al Shabaab infrastructure and ideology would be more effective and called for.

Terror groups like Al-Shabaab can thrive in the operational environment created by military involvement, as they can exploit narratives championing marginalized groups and adapt quickly to conventional military tactics.

The rigidity of conventional doctrines and the need for survival are hindering conventional forces, and extremist groups have become more resistant to technological advances by simplifying their tactics. The simplified and cruel

tactics used by the terrorists provides unmatched quantum of force between the combatants.

It's prudent to forge a narrative that instead of fighting in the open terrain in a conventional manner, Al Shabaab has effectively employed guerilla tactics to frustrate any formidable efforts and exploit the predictability and over-reliance on fortified well defended positions.

Overall, the argument is for a shift from traditional military strategies to more adaptable, less kinetic strategies in dealing with modern-day terrorists like Al-Shabaab.

Al-Shabaab's adaptability, resilience, and ideological conviction have proven effective against the more conventionally aligned forces operating in Somalia. Al -Shabaab's strength emanates from their simplicity,



**“Going to their doorstep is the best strategy, lying in wait without being aggressive is the worst strategy. Terrorism requires agility and aggression to deny the enemy the ability to bring his forces to bear.”**

adaptability, and the will to fight. This therefore calls for a ‘Hunters’ Strategy’.

This strategy would involve the creation of a specialized and agile force that operates more like Al-Shabaab, discarding conventional methods and adopting a more flexible, unpredictable approach.

This force would focus on disrupting Al-Shabaab activities, not holding territory, and would need minimal hardware to reduce the visibility of their movements.

The Hunters would aim to mirror Al-Shabaab’s adaptability, endurance, and spirit, with a focus on Junior Command levels as the primary force engaging with Al- Shabaab.

The Hunter’s strategy should focus on morale of the tactical commanders who execute the operations. The actions of the tactical commanders certainly have strategic ramifications hence “Strategic Corporal” needs to be looked into.

Another focus of the strategy is the abolishment of permanent bases and a shift to more nomadic and hasty defenses that are aligned to the activities of the Al- Shabaab.

The Hunter force should be morally prepared, understanding the call to fight against Al -Shabaab and instilled with a sense of national duty and values.

Seeking contact with Al -Shabaab is identified as a primary goal of the lean, agile and highly resourced force. The implementation of this strategy would however involve some level of risk and commitment of resources.

However, the extraordinary challenge presented in defeating the AS calls for extraordinary decisions and flexibility.



A Somali National Army soldier briefs KDF Officer during a joint patrol in Dhobley

# SUMMARY OF ATMIS ACHIEVEMENTS

On 1 April 2023, ATMIS celebrated its first anniversary since its reconfiguration from AMISOM to ATMIS in 2022.

ATMIS has continued to provide a conducive and enabling environment for political stabilization, humanitarian assistance, and peacebuilding processes.

The following are some of the key achievements of ATMIS:

## ATMIS 1ST YEAR ACHIEVEMENTS

### • A. Reduce the threat posed by Al-Shabaab:

- Planned and coordinated several joint and independent operations to disrupt, degrade Al-Shabaab and other armed opposition groups.
- Supported and participated in joint operations leading to the liberation of several towns and villages, including in Hiraan, Galgaduud, and Middle Shabelle regions.
- Held key population centres and secured key government installations and facilities at the Federal and FMS levels.
- Secured Main Supply Routes, including areas recovered from Al-Shabaab, enabling delivery of humanitarian aid to communities in dire need of assistance.
- Secured the main ports of Mogadishu and Kismayo.
- Secured, consolidated, and sustained AMISOM gains throughout the Mission AoR.
- Supported and secured FGS mediation and reconciliation efforts, including the National Consultative Council and the National Reconciliation Commission held at Baidoa in January and February 23.
- Facilitated the delivery of humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations across its AoR, including in hard-to-reach areas.
- Coordinated the delivery of 848.2 MT of humanitarian supplies by WFP, to various populations within ATMIS AoR.

### • B. Support the capacity building of the integrated Somali Security Forces:

- Redeployed to Bariire FoB and collocated with the SSF at the Hawaadley Bridge FOB.
- Mentored the Somali National Security Forces, including through joint planning and joint operations.
- Handed over a 68-bed hospital to the SNA, designed to offer quality services to the Somali Security Forces.
- Constructed and refurbished police stations in different parts of Somalia.
- Handed over a newly constructed Police Station at Johwar airport to the Hirshabelle State Administration.

- Provided operational support, strategic advice and capacity building support to the SPF in Mogadishu and Federal Member States.
- **C. Compliance with International Humanitarian Law, Human Rights Law and all relevant protocols:**
  - Ensured strict compliance with applicable International Humanitarian Law (IHL), International Human Rights (IHRL) and the United Nations Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP).
  - Strengthened measures designed to protect civilians, including preventive, mitigatory and response measures.
  - Worked with the Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development to hold community forums on raising awareness for Human Rights, child protection, CRSV, SGBV and PSEA.
  - Supported the African Union to develop and implement policies for African Union Compliance and Accountability Framework (AUCF).
  - Continued to record and track reported incidents of civilian casualties, including abuses and violations of human rights, through CCTARC.
  - Conducted training for ATMIS and Somali Security Forces.
  - Produced Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).
  - Strengthened ATMIS's internal oversight and accountability mechanisms, including the ATMIS Board of Inquiry.
  - Offered legal advisory on IHL rules and principles governing the conduct of offensive operations against Al-Shabaab to SNA commanders including operational commanders in Hirshabelle and Lower Shabelle regions.
- **D. Conducted a phased handover of security responsibilities to Somali Security Forces:**
  - Handed over several FOBs to the Federal Government of Somalia under the first and second phases of the ATMIS troop drawdown.
  - Established Joint Operations Centres (JOC)
  - Completed the Statement of Unit Requirement (SUR) and Equipment Review.
  - Submitted a detailed reconfiguration plan in preparation for the drawdown of 2,000 ATMIS troops.
  - Conducted a joint assessment and advisory inspection of pledged capabilities, including additional air assets and field hospital.

# FULFILMENT OF ATMIS MANDATE - JOINT OPERATIONS

By Maj Dismas Mosbey– OC New Airport



Commanding Officer 2MIB Lt Col Eric Lovega inspects a classroom block constructed by ATMIS troops at Ahmed Gurey Secondary School in Kismayo.

Conducting joint planned and targeted operations with Somali Security Forces (SSF) to degrade Al-Shabaab and affiliates linked to ISIL and securing Main Supply Routes (MSRs), are core elements of the ATMIS mandate.

They are also critical elements in ensuring that the SSF can take over the full security responsibilities of the country, when ATMIS finally exits, by the end of 2024.

The Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) deployed at New Airport Kismayo Sector Six (6) under auspices of ATMIS together with the SSF have conducted numerous joint patrols and operations to pacify the region and bolster ongoing efforts to degrade Al-Shabaab militants, part of broader efforts to restore peace and stability in Somalia.

These joint operations have yielded

significant gains which include liberation of some areas hitherto under the control of Al-Shabaab, winning the hearts and minds of the local communities and helping to extend governance structures.

Additionally, joint patrols, mentorship programmes and trainings have been conducted for the SSF, while conducting route searches and patrols on MSRs and observing measures to counter Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) while on patrols have been critical, especially in building the capacity of the SSF.

Al-Shabaab militants have continued to lay IEDs along MSRs, targeting ATMIS troops as well as SSF in order to derail pacification efforts. To thwart this threat, ATMIS and SSF have endeavored to enhance their counter IED capabilities, mainly through training.

The training and mentorship programs for the SSF, have been tailored to underscore the observance of proper Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs) while conducting route clearance patrols and enforcing counter-IED measures.

The need for casualty care and basic first aid trainings while on patrols, ambush drills, and conducting raids while on route clearance and dominance patrols, seek to ensure that the SSF are well equipped with sufficient knowledge and skills in readiness to assume full security responsibilities of their country when ATMIS exits.

Some of the aspects and skills learnt include IED threat assessment and mitigation, proper handling of explosives and hazards, convoy movement and troop protection and



ATMIS Sector Six KDF Officers engaging with the local community leadership in Kismayo.

processing of information on actionable intelligence.

These multi-faceted approaches to degrade Al-Shabaab’s capabilities and operation tempo have yielded numerous gains, especially in Sector Six.

Some of the achievements include the joint detonation of several IEDs along the MSR connecting villages near the New Airport Kismayo, by the 2

Mechanized Infantry Battalion (2 MIB) A CT, the Somali National Army and Jubaland Security Forces.

Additionally, the joint troops have been able to secure population centres in their Area of Responsibilities (AoR), thereby winning the trust of the local communities, crucial in the efforts to degrade the Al-Shabaab.

After more than a decade of peace

enforcement, the wind of change is blowing across the horn of Africa and particularly Somalia.

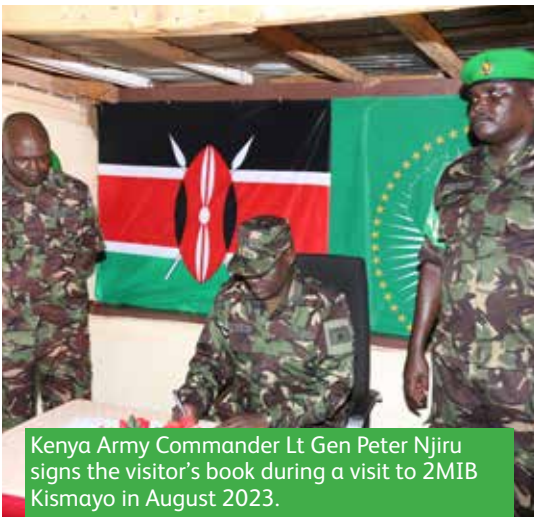
This is augmented by the zeal and determination of the citizenry to take over the mantle of leadership and to defend and protect the sovereignty of their -land. May God grant the SSF the wisdom to protect their citizens with courage, honour and dignity.



ATMIS Sector Six Commander Brig Lucas Kutto inspecting the newly built hospital at Old Airport Forward Operating Base (FOB) in October 2023.



Chief of Defence Forces (CDF), General Francis Ogolla addressing soldiers during a visit to Burgavo FOB in September 2023.



Kenya Army Commander Lt Gen Peter Njiru signs the visitor's book during a visit to 2MIB Kismayo in August 2023.



Kenya Army Commander, Lt Gen Peter Njiru during a visit to Abdi Birole in August 2023.



ATMIS Deputy Force Commander - Logistics and Support, Maj Gen Peter Kimani Muteti is saluted by senior Officers during a visit to Dhobley in October 2023.



ATMIS Sector Two Commander Brig William Kamoiro donates medical supplies to Afmadhow General Hospital in June 2023.



ATMIS Sector Six Commander Brig Lucas Kutto cuts a ribbon during the launch of Level One Plus hospital at Old Kismayo Airport in November 2023.



ATMIS Commanding Officer 3MIB Lt Col Japhet Mulwa donates assorted food items to families in Afmadhow district.



KDF troops providing clean water to families at Burahache FOB in Gedo region.



ATMIS Commanding Officer Maj Kemboi donates iron sheets to a Forward Operating Base (FOB).



Capt Joseph Njoroge with KDF engineering soldiers during the rehabilitation of Dhobley airstrip in May 2023.



Passengers boarding a commercial aircraft after the rehabilitation of Dhobley airstrip by KDF engineers.



KDF Officers attending the Defence Cabinet Secretary's brief during a visit to New Airport Forward Operating Base (FOB) in December 2023.



ATMIS Commanding Officer 2MIB Lt Col Eric Lovega hands over educational materials to Ahmed Gurey primary and secondary schools.



a local resident at Dhobley



Defence Cabinet Secretary Hon. Aden Duale speaking to KDF soldiers during a visit to New Airport Forward Operating Base. He was accompanied by the Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) General Francis Ogolla.



g an official  
23.



A KDF soldier constructing an Anti-VBIED trench during the fortification of the SNA Dhobley camp in March 2023.



KDF troops handing over Gherille Forward Operating Base to Somali Security Forces on 30 June 2023



Somalia's Prime Minister Madobe during a visit to construction of an airstrip



Former ATMIS Sector Two Commander Brig Jattani Gula hands over a flag to incoming commander Brig William Kamoiro in March 2023.



KDF soldiers donate a water pump



KDF troops in Sector Two mark KDF Day on 14, October 2023.

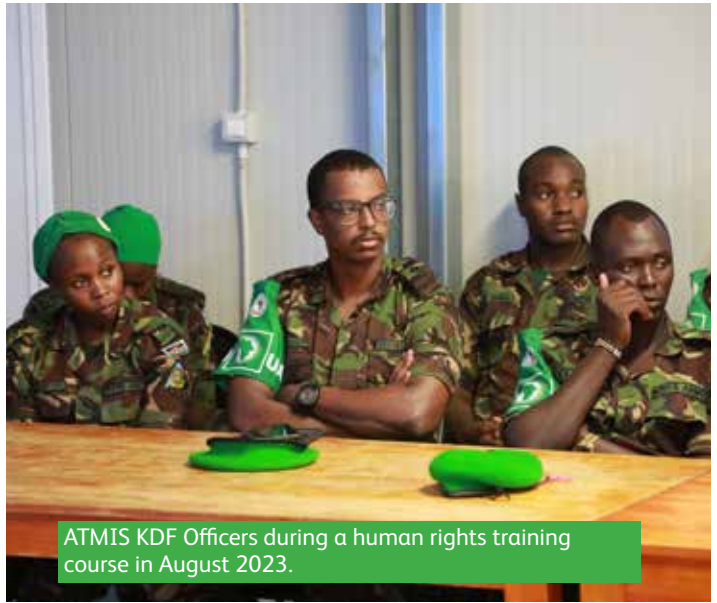


KDF medics conduct surgery





Hamza Abdi Barre and Jubaland president Ahmed Afmadhow district to lay the foundation for the



ATMIS KDF Officers during a human rights training course in August 2023.



tank to Dhobley police station in October 2023.



KDF troops exiting Gherille Forward Operating Base after handing over to Somali Security Forces on 30 June 2023.



on a patient at Dhobley Level Two Hospital in March 2023.



Maj Kelvin Mukhwana with the COE team on an inspection of equipment at Sector Two in November 2023.



ATMIS Sector Two Commander, Brig William Kamoiro awards a certificate to a midwifery student during the CIMIC mentorship course graduation ceremony at Dhobley Level Two hospital in December 2023.



ATMIS Sector Two Commander, Brig William Kamoiro engages the Disaster Management Team on how to deal with El-Nino rains in Jubaland State.



A KDF soldier mentoring civilian staff on how to grow kales (sukuma wiki) at Dhobley Forward Operating Base in August 2023.



ATMIS Sector Two Deputy Commander, Col Aden Safe leading troops in marking the World HIV/AIDS day in December 2023.



Capt (Dr.) Fredrick Cheruiyot reviewing a baby who underwent the removal of nasal polyps at Garissa County Hospital courtesy of sector Two Officers.



Maj Dismus Mosbey, the Officer Commanding (OC) of New Airport Forward Operating Base handing over assorted school supplies to students at Wajadir primary school.



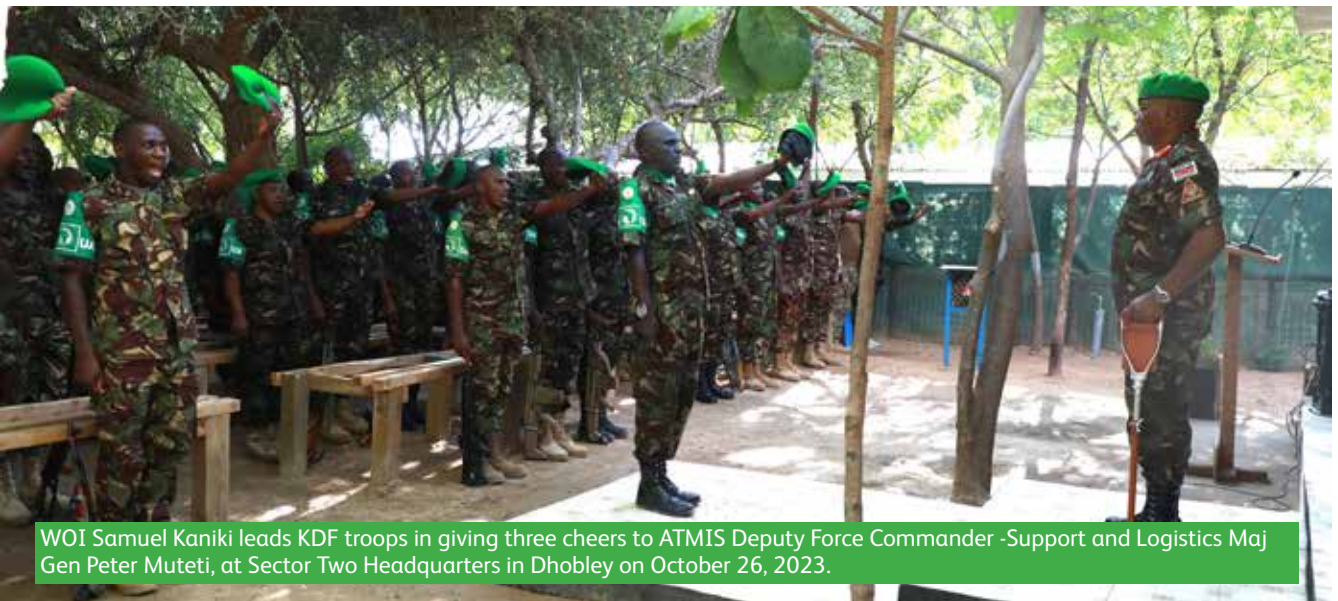
ATMIS Sector Six medics conducting a medical camp at Daisan village in August 2023.



ATMIS Sector Two KDF troops assist in loading assorted items for distribution to flood-affected victims in Dhobley in December 2023.



KDF nurses attend to an Abled differently patient who underwent a surgical delivery (caesarean) at Dhobley Level Two Hospital.



WOI Samuel Kaniki leads KDF troops in giving three cheers to ATMIS Deputy Force Commander -Support and Logistics Maj Gen Peter Muteti, at Sector Two Headquarters in Dhobley on October 26, 2023.

# HEALTH SECURITY: A BACKBONE OF A SECURE SOMALIA

By Lt Col (Dr) Stanley Ng'ang'a- Senior Medical Officer, Dhobley Level II Hospital



KDF medics conducting surgery on a patient at Level Two Hospital.

Somalia's health sector was not spared the brunt of decades of war and conflict. The conflict and civil unrest led to the exodus of professionals and decimated the health infrastructure. However, despite a return of relative peace and a rebounding economy, some of the effects still linger on.

While healthcare needs have continued to increase, the same cannot be said of the resources and infrastructure.

In light of the existing challenges, ATMIS Kenyan troops have had to step in in their Area of Responsibilities (AoR), to provide free medical support.

These medical services, supported by KENCON XII in line with ATMIS CONOPS and the Somali Transition Plan (STP),



ATMIS Sector Two Deputy Commander Col Safe Adan Safe together with Level Two medics pose for a photo after donating medical supplies to Dhobley General Hospital, in August 2023.

aim support the efforts of the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and to meet immediate and long-term needs for SSF and the local communities.

ATMIS KDF medical personnel have provided services ranging from medical emergency and trauma conditions to diagnostic laboratory, X-ray & ultrasound, clinical services, surgical reviews and operations and nutritional support.

Other support includes psychological counseling, physiotherapy, and in-patient admission. Patients come from near and far, to seek medical care at the Level II and other hospitals within the AoR.

ATMIS KDF troops have not only provided free medical care but also provided medical training as part of its mentorship programme and donated medical items to local hospitals, particularly in Jubaland State.

In December 2023, eight nurses affiliated with Dhobley General

Hospital in Jubaland State successfully completed a rigorous seven-month medical training programme.

Facilitated by ATMIS KDF medical personnel, the training covered critical areas such as epilepsy, midwifery, operating room and surgical procedures, along with other essential healthcare protocols.

The training in which the students graduated with certificates aimed to equip them with hands-on skills set critical for patient survival and bring service delivery closer to the local communities.

Established in 2009, Dhobley General Hospital, owned by the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), to serve the local community.

However, the facility faces numerous challenges, including staff shortages, inadequate drugs and medical supplies, insufficient infrastructure, and lack periodic career training to build the capacity of its medical personnel.

ATMIS KDF troops, under a tripartite MoU signed with the UN, AU, and the Kenyan Government, through its Level II hospital in Dhobley, has intervened to bridge the gap, through the provision of free medical camps, donation of medical supplies and items to Dhobley General Hospital and provision of training for its medical personnel in a bid to enhance service delivery.

Consequently, the health interventions have yielded positive results in enhancing the capacity of the SSF and fostering cordial relations with the local community, crucial in countering terrorism and violent extremism.

ATMIS remains committed to meeting the health needs of the Somali people as it continues with efforts, jointly or independently with SSF, to disrupt, degrade and deny Al-Shabaab freedom of movement and action. Amidst all these initiatives, a light, shines in the horizon.



Sgt Veronica Wambui mentoring a Dhobley medical student while attending to a patient.

# SUCCESSFULL SIX-HOUR SURGICAL FOR A TEN YEAR LONG - STANDING EAR INFECTION AND CHOLESTEATOMA

## SMO Sect VI Capt (DR) Oluoch

On a normal day in February 2023, a teenager, Jama Osman, accompanied by his family members walked into the ATMIS Level 1 Plus Hospital at the New Airport. He had a medical condition.

For the past 10 years, the young man, has been oozing a foul-smelling discharge from both ears. Additionally, he had suffered hearing loss in the left ear and had facial nerve palsy, a medical condition which refers to weakness of the facial muscles, mainly resulting from temporary or permanent damage to the facial nerve.

For a long time, few people had hoped that Jama’s condition would be reversed and that he would live a normal life, given that numerous attempts to seek treatment at various local health facilities had not yielded much as the symptoms persisted.

With time, Jama’s condition on the left ear deteriorated until he finally lost hearing ability. However, luck smiled upon him when he learnt about the medical support being offered at the ATMIS KDF Level 1 Plus Hospital.

Accompanied by his mother, uncle and brother, Jama decided to give it a shot-a bold decision that transformed his life for good.

At the hospital, Jama underwent a comprehensive evaluation to assess his condition and establish the underlying causes. A thorough physical examination with specific focus on the ear structure was conducted.

Armed with the findings, Jama was diagnosed with a chronic ear infection and the left ear with a cholesteatoma, an abnormal collection of skin cells inside the middle ear, that ultimately

leads to recurrent ear infection and discharge, loss of hearing, and dizziness. Major complications may develop as infection spreads from the middle ear to the structures of the central nervous system.

With the consent of his next of kin, ATMIS KDF medical personnel, conducted a successful six- hour surgery to remove the cholesteatoma (a cyst-like growth behind the eardrum or involving the ear drum). This was followed up with weekly reviews and management of the surgical wound at the surgical outpatient clinic.

After four months, an ecstatic and jovial Jama was discharged from the health facility after full recovery, to continue with his normal life. Jama and his family could not hide their joy and thanked the ATMIS KDF medical personnel for giving him a new lease of life.



KDF medics reviewing a patient, Jama Osman during a follow up clinic visit at Level One Plus Hospital in New Airport, Kismayo.

# KISS OF LIFE IN PEACEKEEPING

By Capt (Dr) Daniel Ochoi – Regimental Medical Officer 1 MIB



KDF medics treating a snake bite patient at Burahache Forward Operating Base in Gedo region.

In the sweltering heat of a slow mid-February Thursday afternoon, gusty winds sweep across the Burahache Forward Operating Base (FOB).

Located in the Gedo region, the FOB is home to Kenyan troops serving with the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS).

Despite the harsh conditions exacerbated by the lengthy drought, the occupants of the FOB are unfazed and remain steadfast- keeping watch as they implement the mission mandate.

Suddenly there is a flurry of activities. At 14:42hrs, the medical team is alerted of a child, a snake bite victim in need of urgent medical attention. Swiftly, the medical team springs into action at the Regimental Aid Post (RAP).

From the direction of the FOB main gate, a man in a colorful green turban, white shirt and checked macawi approaches, supporting a young girl in black niqab. The girl who is approximately 10 years, grimaces, her eyes teary.

“Assalamu aleikum,” the father proffers in greeting. “Wa-aleikum-Salaam,” the ATMIS KDF medical personnel responded.

Looking at their dusty feet, its clear that they have covered a long distance to get to the ATMIS Hospital, there being no medical facilities in the area.

Later, we get to learn that they have come from Seddex Jiirood II village, 11 km from the FOB. The village is home to hundreds of displaced people, fleeing conflict in the region.

From a gunny bag, the middle-aged man removes a black six feet foul smelling snake, which was killed after it had bitten the girl, a day earlier, on her left lower limb.

A dark thick substance harvested from a local tree had been applied on the spot, a common local practice in the region used to treat snake bites. The fang bites were still evident on her heel, though not actively bleeding but with the surrounding skin forming dead tissue.

A preliminary assessment of the girl was done, and treatment commenced. The father watched keenly as oral medicine was administered, and an appointment scheduled for a later date for review. As they headed home from the hospital, they left with an assortment of food items, given to them as part of the

comprehensive care.

This single incident marked a new chapter. It did not only strengthen relations with the family but also triggered off a domino effect, building bonds of friendship and trust, with the local community, crucial in the fight against the Al-Shabaab and ongoing efforts to restore peace and stability in Somalia.

Since then, there has been a steady rise in the number of local Somali’s- from near and far seeking medical care at the ATMIS Hospital in the FOB.

Somalia has been grappling with climate induced shocks, such as floods and drought and was staring at a looming famine, resulting in conflict related displacements, lack of clean potable water and a spike in illnesses.

The lack of clean potable water has greatly contributed to the rise in malnutrition related illnesses, including anaemia and diarrhea, mainly due to poor sanitation and hygiene facilities.

In light of the situation, the Commanding Officer (CO) 1 Mechanized Infantry Battalion (1 MIB), Lt Col Andrew Kamau Ng’anga encouraged ATMIS KDF medical officers to continuously offer medical support to members of the local community.

Also, ATMIS KDF officers provided training for SSF medical personnel and provided them with equipment and supplies. This is in line with the adage: Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime.

These CIMIC activities have helped to strengthen relations with the local communities and improve socio-economic development.



# BURGAVO DISTRESS CALLS THAT SAVED LIVES

February 27, 2023, is one of those days that will remain etched in the minds of ATMIS KDF medical personnel.



Burgavo medical team poses for a photo during the donation of IV FLUIDS to the management of a local Hospital.

On that day, we received a call from the OC Burgavo FOB, Maj J M Namasake, to review a 16-year-old Somali girl, Halima Abdulahi, who had been admitted to a local health facility in critical condition, having been pricked by a nail in the left foot, leaving her in great danger.

The OC had received a distress call from the area commander of the Somali National Army (SNA) informing him of the patient who was on the verge of having her leg amputated or worse still, losing her life.

Following the unfortunate incident, Halima had sought treatment at a local health facility, but her condition worsened and the wound became septic. With time, Halima failed to walk due to excruciating pain as her condition continued to degenerate.

A medical evaluation of the injury by ATMIS KDF medical personnel found that the wound was inflamed, edematous (swollen with an excessive accumulation of fluid) and oozing puss, and tender. The severity of the injury finally prompted her to drop out of

school.

Armed with the findings, the ATMIS KDF medical team swiftly commenced treatment, starting with administering local anesthesia to numb the wound, then performing a minor surgery to drain and remove dead (necrotic) or infected skin tissue to help a wound heal.

Additionally, they administered a tetanus jab -to prevent tetanus-and other antibiotics to prevent further infection of the wound and help with the healing process, and thereafter observing a daily regimen of cleaning and dressing the wound.

Two weeks later, the medical team noted significant improvement on the wound in terms of healing and repair, including blood supply.

By early April, there was remarkable progress and Halima was now able to able to walk freely and resume her studies.

Weeks later Halima fully recovered and her parents and the local community were grateful to the medical team for

coming to the aid of Halima and saving her from amputation enabling her to resume her studies.

Relatedly, the medical team also conducted several medical camps in the area where they offered free medical support to members of the local community, to treat various medical conditions, thereby enhancing their over health.

In May, the ATMIS KDF medical team, responded to a distress call from a local health facility in Burgavo and came to the rescue of Fatuma Ibrahim, a 25-year-old woman, who had suffered a miscarriage.

Later, the medical team assessed the maternity wing at the health facility and donated an assortment of drugs after finding out that it was in dire need of IV fluids and other drugs.



Halima Abdulahi, a patient who was pricked by a nail being treated by KDF medics at Burgavo Forward Operating Base.

# "HOPING AGAINST HOPE"- THE SMILE OF BEING A NURSE

By Ssgt Ruth Kimani-Nurse, Dhobley Level II Hospital



Ssgt Ruth Kimani handling a patient at Dhobley Level Two Hospital.

## **"Hope deferred makes the heart sick but when the desire is fulfilled it is a tree of life" (Proverbs 13:12)**

Being a Nurse entails giving hope to those who are sick and the wounded. As a nurse, it gives one great joy when a patient walks out of the hospital, to go back home, healed and with a smile on their faces.

It is even more pleasing when you meet them when they return for review or in the streets and they remind you of the impact that you made in their lives. This serves as a motivation to keep doing good to humanity.

Each passing day that I attend to a patient, puts a smile on my face when I see them get better, or when I offer words of encouragement and they take life positively, which in turn helps them to recover quickly.

As a nurse, you are the shoulder that patients lean on when the Doctors and Clinicians have left the scene, and at the same time, their closest help because,

most of the time, their relatives are not allowed to stay on as they undergo treatment.

Spending time with patients in hospital takes patience and determination, given that as a nurse, you do not only offer medical care but also encouragement, crucial for their recovery.

Sickness and pain cause a mixed feeling of fear and despair and as a nurse, you should be able to empathize with patients and offer support, to enable them to bear the pain and face their situation.

During my tour of duty in Somalia, I encountered several injured soldiers,

many of them Somali Security Forces (SSF). Despite the language barrier, as a nurse, I would take the initiative to reassure and give them hope.

On several occasions, many of them after being admitted and receiving treatment at the ATMIS medical facility, were able to return to their units, with smiles on their faces, leaving me with the satisfaction of having made a difference in the life of fellow soldiers.

In addition to being a pillar, the nurse also acts as a link between the patients and other medics who make up the multidisciplinary team that takes care of patients admitted to the hospital.

Through daily assessment, the nurse can identify the daily needs of patients

and communicate to the other teams in the hospital, such as nutritionists, counselors, and physiotherapists, to ensure that patients receive holistic care.

My tour of duty also exposed me to several incidents, some of them disturbing. One such incident involved a 13-year-old boy - a victim of street violence.

When he was rushed to the hospital for medical care, the boy was in critical condition and could not breathe because his lungs had been affected.

It turned out that the homeless boy had been stabbed in the chest with a knife by his friend, on the streets, following a disagreement.

After spending a week at the medical facility, he was discharged but the realization that he was returning to the streets was devastating.

In another incident, I encountered a three-month-old baby, with a cleft lip and palate, who had been in and out of hospital due to recurrent aspiration pneumonia, a medical condition which refers to the infection of the lungs caused by inhaling saliva, food, liquid, vomit and even small foreign objects.

By the time, the boy was brought to the hospital the parents had lost hope, given that the baby was unable to feed and was emaciated.

However, after receiving treatment and the baby began to gain weight, they were discharged. The mother was happy and optimistically looked forward to the time the child would be able, to undergo cleft lip surgery.

The other incident involved four casualties, all victims of a shootout in the villages of Dhobley. They were brought to the hospital at the same time, but one died upon arrival because he was critically injured.

One of the casualties had been shot in the abdomen and bleeding profusely, necessitating emergency surgery. That night proved to be the toughest in my practice. The surgery was long and exhausting.

I watched as the patient fought for his life. Thankfully, he emerged from the theatre alive. The patient was transferred to the High Dependency Unit (HDU) and later to the ward, though he later developed complications.

He was admitted at the hospital for the next one month and each passing day, I kept encouraging him to eat and get out of bed.

On the day he was being discharged after recovering, we could not hide our joy and excitement as we bade him farewell.



A KDF nurse checking the temperature of a baby during a CIMIC activity at Dhobley Level Two Hospital.



Ssgt Ruth Kimani wheels a patient at Dhobley Level Two Hospital during a CIMIC activity.

Then there was also the disturbing incident of a young Somali soldier who had been shot and critically injured and at risk of being paralyzed.

The treatment and encouragement gave him a ray of hope and was more positive about life than before.

His colleague also suffered a gunshot in the abdomen, leaving a big wound that could not be stitched and had to be left open, to be cleaned and dressed daily.

The sight was terrifying, and the patient

kept fearing that his bowels would come through the open wound.

A few days later he was referred for further care, but he was happy about his short stay with us, thanks for the care he had received.

Despite the mixed encounters, it has been an absolute delight serving as a female peacekeeper, and most importantly as a nurse for ATMIS KDF troops, thereby providing the much-needed support to my fellow

combatants, both KDF and SSF in the pursuit of lasting peace in Somalia.

We can only look forward with optimism, to a brighter, peaceful and stable Somalia, where every citizen can flourish and prosper.

# ONE FORCE, ONE MISSION: TRI-SERVICE SYNERGY

By Capt Evans Werungah – Public Information Officer, Sector II



KDF troops boarding a HUEY helicopter from Afmadhow to Dhobley.

The Chief of Defence Forces (CDF), General Francis Ogolla, once issued a clarion call: “One Force One Mission.”

And nothing makes a soldier smile like seeing a force united with a purpose to defend and fulfill our motto of Ulinzi Daima (Guaranteed protection).

Every soldier smiles when the enemy is neutralized in a war theatre. The effect of combined arms in Somalia has yielded success in the fight against Al Shabaab.

The synergy between the Kenya Army, Air Force, and Navy proved to be a masterstroke in the achievement of ATMIS mandate in Somalia.

The Air Force’s aerial dominance provided invaluable reconnaissance and support, while the Army’s ground forces executed precision maneuvers.

The Navy’s maritime superiority, in

turn, facilitated strategic mobility and control of crucial Somalia coastal regions like Kuday and Seaport FOBs.

Aerial precision was very visible during the operation dubbed Thunderstrike 3 which saw various areas under Al Shabaab control liberated, including areas of Welmarow northeast of Afmadhow KDF FOB.

During this operation, the Kenya Army Corps of Aviation (KACA) contribution was pivotal, as its fleet of aircraft offered unparalleled aerial reconnaissance and firepower.

Precision airstrikes carried out by MD500 Helicopters decimated enemy positions, while the Fire Support Coordinating Cell (FSCC) situated in Kismayo was very instrumental in neutralizing enemy pockets.

The collaboration between KDF and

international partners demonstrated the importance of controlling the skies for successful mission operation while the MIBs and 2 brigade troops pacified most Main Supply Routes (MSRs) in Jubaland State by conducting joint patrols with the SSF as well as providing counter terrorism measures.

During the handover of the Gherile FOB to Somali Security Forces, The MD 500 Helicopters provided aerial surveillance as the KDF troops moved from Gherile Somalia FOB to Gherile Kenya ensuring effective Force protection.

Additionally, the Kenya Air Force aircrafts have been in the fore front in ensuring seamless supplies of ammunition and transportation of troops from various FOBs as well as casualty evacuation of our soldiers and civilian populations.



Kenya Navy Ship Shujaa on administrative duties to Kismayo

The navy's strategic role cannot be understated. It established maritime supremacy, ensuring unfettered access to coastal areas like Kuday and Seaport FOBs and critical supply lines.

Naval vessels, including amphibious assault ships, carried out relentless naval bombardments, denying enemy forces freedom of movement and supply along the coastal areas of Juba valley.

The Field intelligence (FIT), analysts and the general liaison teams both in

Kismayo and Dhobley were instrumental in this triumphant collaboration by providing seamless communication and sharing intelligence, thereby facilitating real-time exchange of critical information within the theatre and enabling prompt decision-making with adaptive responses.

This synchronized effort enabled the tri-services to stay one step ahead of the adversary, capitalizing on their combined strengths in achievement of ATMIS mandate.

The transitional period geared towards the full transfer of security responsibilities to Somali Security Force, serves as a template for future military endeavors.

The lessons learned from this inter-service synergy have far-reaching implications, Collaborative training exercises and joint operations can further enhance interoperability and strengthen Kenya's collective defense capabilities.



MD 500 HELIS providing escort to HUEY helicopter during operations in Somalia

# NOT BY CHANCE, BUT BY POSTURE

By Lt Col Japheth Mulei Mulwa ‘psc’ (k) – Commanding Officer 3 MIB



KDF soldiers in a joint training with Somali Security Forces on IED and Counter IED awareness at Afmadhow FOB.

I am honoured to serve as Commander of 3 MIB Sub Sector Central under ATMIS during this critical period when security responsibilities are being transferred to the Somali Security Forces.

Our success in executing the ATMIS mandate is attributed to the dedication and vision of commanders at all levels to operate cohesively. Before my deployment, the central Sector reorganised the Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) and added Burgavo, Sariirle and Hoosingo locations.

My initial task was to unite and forge a cohesive force. During my familiarisation tour of all FOBs in the Central Sector, I emphasised the importance of focus, vigilance, and situational awareness among soldiers.

I stressed to every soldier the significance of understanding that an enemy located 100 kilometres away is a threat to all FOBs. I also stressed the importance of not underestimating the enemy.

Attacks such as the lone-wolf attack on Sariirle FOB in November 2022 and the daylight assaults on Ethiopian forces at Dolow and Bardhere in June 2023 illustrate the constant evolution of enemy tactics.

In response, all troops and commanders were equipped with situational awareness information and maintained a 24-hour alertness. This information was shared during BARAZAs and through continuous innovation.

As 3MIB, we installed solar-powered

motion sensor lights in the FOBs as an early warning system to deter intrusions. We also prioritised continuous training to boost morale and the tactical proficiency of the troops. Soldiers were trained to adhere to the engineer’s mantra of ‘soldier first.’ We also conducted regular camp defence rehearsals and weapons testing. This improved the skills of commanders and sent a warning message to the enemy.

Professionalism is one of our core values in KDF, encompassing the moral and ethical standards expected of all soldiers. Al-Shabaab can be effectively combated if we understand our duty and execute it professionally.

The KDF and Somali Security Forces (SSF) collaborated in all FOBs to implement



ATMIS Sector Two Commander Brig William Kamoiro being welcomed by Officers during his visit to Afmadhow FOB.

an intensive awareness programme to counter Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). The awareness focused on components used to create IEDs and measures to safely dispose of IEDs. This was in line with this year's theme: "Somali security independence through capacity building and counterterrorism."

In conclusion, I want to thank my superiors for giving me the opportunity to command. Despite the challenges, this experience has provided me an opportunity for personal growth and responsibility.



ATMIS Sector Two Commander Brig William Kamoiro meeting with Afmadhow local administration officials during the donation of medical supplies to Afmadhow General Hospital.



# COMMANDER'S RESPONSIBILITY IN SAFEGUARDING CIVILIAN POPULATION

By Lt Col Andrew Ng'ang'a – Commanding Officer 1 MIB



Burahache FOB Commander Lt Col Andrew Ng'ang'a poses for a photo during the donation of food items to locals at Burahache in Gedo region.

On 14 October 2017, two truck bombs exploded in Mogadishu, Somalia, killing at least 587 people and injuring 316 others. It was believed that Al-Shabaab carried out the attack, although the group did not claim responsibility due to the high number of casualties. The group feared a public backlash since the attack left a trail of destruction and untold suffering, whose effects are still felt today.

Later, on 29 October 2022, a car bomb explosion at Zoobe Junction in Mogadishu killing at least 100 people and injuring 300 more. The attack left behind a trail of destruction and suffering by civilians. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack.

Civilians bear the brunt of conflict when towns and cities become battlefields. During conflict, civilians may suffer casualties caught in crossfire between opposing forces or may be deliberately targeted by combatants.

However, civilians are not always killed

in combat. Indirect causes of death during war include poverty, hunger, and lack of medical care and supplies. Conflicts in populated areas exacerbate risks to civilians, disrupting livelihoods, education, health systems, and critical infrastructure.

After war, there are challenges rebuilding neighbourhoods, economies, with trauma and post-war effects impacting lives. Statistics show that one in five people living in an active or recent conflict zone, suffers depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia.

“Civilian harm” which refers to all negative effects on civilians, their personal and community well-being, can occur directly through death, physical or mental trauma, property damage, or indirectly through the destruction of critical infrastructure and disruption of access to basic needs and services.

Civilian harm can occur due to failure

to distinguish between military objectives and civilians, inadequate positive identification (PID) of targets, and indirect fire in populated areas. Others include unexploded ordnance and minefields, inappropriate use of excessive force at checkpoints, sexual exploitation, and abuse.

Military commanders must therefore think, plan, and protect civilians not only against harm that may result from their own activities and operations, but also against harm that may result from other armed groups in their jurisdiction.

Civilians are protected from harm under customary international law and Protocol I, which reaffirms and supports customary principles. It prohibits attacks on civilians and civilian objects and requires a distinction to be made between combatants and civilians.

Article 51 Protocol I requires commanders to verify military targets. Additionally, they must take all feasible precautions in the choice of methods

and means of attack to avoid and minimize collateral damage.

Commanders in armed conflict, like the Somalia war, must distinguish between civilians and military targets, as dictated by International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

In any operation, the success of a professional military depends not only on its strength, but also on its ability to protect civilians. The military should therefore entrench professionalism and best practices, in addition to the following recommended measures:

- Provide commanders with information, understand the civilian environment, and incorporate guidance into doctrine

and operation plans.

- Develop the capability to assess, prevent, mitigate, and respond to civilian harm resulting from operations.

- Incorporate civilian harm mitigation response into training and professional military education.

- Develop mechanisms to address the harm caused to civilians by unlawful force.

- The military should institute a civilian harm tracking process.

From the two earlier-mentioned attacks by Al-Shabaab deliberately targeting civilians, one would ask, can the terrorist group be held accountable for

its actions? The answer is yes!

In as much as Al-Shabaab is not party to the treaties and does not possess the international legal capacity to be signatory to a treaty, the group is obligated to comply with the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC). This is because their obligation flows from the activity of belligerence and is still derivative of the State on whose territory it operates.

Al-Shabaab has no regard for the LOAC and therefore no combatant immunity. Captured Al-Shabaab fighters are liable for prosecution for LOAC violations and can be charged individually.



Burahache FOB Commander, Lt Col Andrew Ng'ang'a alongside the leadership of Jubaland Security Forces during the official launch of a newly constructed mosque at Burahache Somalia Security Forces Base Camp.

# AERIAL DETERRENCE: AIRPOWER SUPERIORITY IN COMBATING AL-SHABAAB

By Maj Marvin Kiprono - OC Aviation



Maj Marvin Kiprono supervising arming of MD500 helicopter during the launch of operation Thunderstrike IV in July 2023.

Terrorism has plagued Somalia for decades, with Al-Shabaab posing a significant threat to the country's stability and security. In the fight against extremism, aviation has emerged as a crucial tool to combat Al-Shabaab activities.

It is important to acknowledge the multifaceted role of aviation in Somalia, highlighting how it aids intelligence gathering, logistics support, close air support (CAS), armed air reconnaissance (AAR) and conducting targeted airstrikes, ultimately contributing to efforts to degrade Al-Shabaab.

It is crucial to note that aviation is not a substitute for other members of the combined arms team. Rather, it brings unique capabilities that complement the other combat arms.

Aviation supports ground troops during operations. Aviation can quickly respond to requests for support from ground forces, providing timely assistance and adapting to rapidly changing battlefield situations.

Aviation assets can have a psychological effect on both friendly and enemy forces, boosting friendly troops' morale and potentially deterring adversaries. Effective communication and collaboration between ground forces and aviation units is critical to successful operations.

Aviation assets such as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and surveillance aircraft, provide enhanced surveillance and intelligence-gathering capabilities while simultaneously conducting Armed Air Reconnaissance (AAR).

These assets can cover large areas, monitor remote regions, and collect real-time information on Al-Shabaab activities, including movements, supply chains, and hideouts. This valuable intelligence can be promptly shared with ground forces and law enforcement agencies, enabling swift and effective response operations.

Targeted airstrikes using attack helicopters, fighter jets, or drones, loaded with precision munitions, are usually conducted to neutralise or eliminate high-value targets, militia assets, or strategic locations. Strikes of this type provide rapid response and the ability to cover large areas quickly.

However, it's critical to note that targeted airstrikes can also raise concerns about collateral damage and civilian casualties. To minimise

these risks, military forces engage in thorough intelligence gathering and employ precision-guided munitions to minimise unintended harm.

Airstrikes often require advance careful planning, coordination, and adherence to international law and rules of engagement. Airstrikes are typically conducted by the ATMIS air component (like KDF Aviation), or international partners providing aerial support. They target key Al-Shabaab positions, training camps, supply routes, and high-value individuals within the group's leadership.

Aviation targeted airstrikes in Somalia are intended to weaken Al-Shabaab's operational capabilities, hinder its

ability to plan and carry out attacks, and exert pressure on the group.

Light logistic support uses helicopters to deliver essential supplies and services to military or civilian personnel in remote locations. This form of aerial support is particularly valuable in areas where ground transportation is limited or inaccessible. It is also useful when rapid delivery of critical items is required. In situations where the main supply routes (MSR) are contaminated with improvised explosive devices (IEDs) or impassable due to rains, helicopters come in handy.

During military operations, especially in areas with difficult terrain or limited infrastructure, aviation assets can

efficiently transport troops, evacuate casualties, deliver equipment, food, medical supplies, and ammunition to forward operating bases or remote locations.

KDF Aviation has proved to be a force multiplier in the fight against Al-Shabaab. In one instance, the commanding officer of the Somali National Army (SNA) at Afmadhow requested helicopters to extricate troops from an IED-reinforced ambush at Harbole. The operation was timely and effective!



MD 500 helicopters conducting an aerial surveillance in sub-Sector Central environs.

# TWO ANSWERED QUESTIONS – READY FOR SOMALI SECURITY INDEPENDENCE?

By Sgt Daniel Okello - Analyst



Somali Security Forces Officers undergoing training on threats to security at Sector Two headquarters in Dhobley.

offering military training to SSF to build an organised force.

In this transition phase from ATMIS, the SSF will require a 360-degree transformation in its command structures, promotion, and continuous training. This will enable soldiers to develop progressive military careers.

ATMIS forces have provided support to the SSF in fighting Al-Shabaab in the last couple of years. However, Somalia's security and independence lie in the collective decisions made by the Federal Government and the people of Somalia to build their country. ATMIS only plays a support role, but the solution lies with Somalia and her people.

A highly effective military should have essential elements of numbers, discipline, training, morale, and equipment. With all these, the will to fight automatically leads to professionalism.

How is military training and promotion conducted in Somalia? - Whoever wants to learn must demonstrate a willingness to learn and judge positively. It is also right to inculcate discipline when

Somalia security forces having gained from ATMIS troops, can form a formidable force that can withstand terrorist activities not only in Somalia but also across Africa.

The Somalia Security Forces (SSF), currently have the numbers in terms of personnel, and with continuous recruitment of personnel, Somalia will eventually develop a solid force.

In the past year, since ATMIS II deployed in January 2023, it was observed during KDF and Somalia National Army (SNA) interactions, that SNA has a variety of chains of command and pays minimal recognition to the chain of command. It was our responsibility to ensure that they understood the importance of the chain of command while executing their mandate.



ATMIS Sector Two Commander Brig William Kamoiro engaging with Somali Security Forces during a visit to JISA camp.

# EYES FROM THE SKY

By Cpl Collince Omondi – UAV operator/ instructor



KDF troops using drones to conduct aerial surveillance during a joint patrol with Somali Security Forces in Dhobley.

For any plan to succeed, information is key.

The Holy Bible in the Book of Numbers 13:1-33 says that, ‘Then Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, Go up this way into the South, and go up to the mountains, and see what the land is like: whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, few or any; whether the land they dwell in is good or bad; whether the cities they inhabit are like camps or strongholds; whether the land is rich or poor; and whether there are forests there or not. Be of good courage. And bring some of the fruit of the land (feedback).’

This substantiates the need for

actionable information. The art of information hunting has therefore been around as long as humanity.

It is essential to integrate technology with Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) to support counterterrorism efforts in Somalia.

There is little known about Stealth Eying from The Sky (SEFTS), a tactic used with remarkable success to gather intelligence and conduct remote warfare against Al-Shabaab.

UAVs have greatly impacted on military imagery needs by production of 3D models of boulders and the enemy hideouts in real time. This removes the need for scaffolding that would otherwise demand more human capital

which would lead to troop exhaustion due to physical over commitment.

Drones are helpful in mapping, identification and monitoring of environmentally sensitive areas – where Al-Shabaab perennially directs attacks, augmenting troops efforts during patrols and route clearances through combat tracking and convoy over watch, faster and more accurate detection of enemy encroachment across camp parapets at night as well as intensification and sustaining troops during long-range/enduring patrols.

Nonetheless, the ‘unseen eye in the skies’ cues other human intelligence collectors while in fields. It provides redundancy of reports from other

intelligence assets, guides Indirect Fire Weapons and also provides Battle Damage Assessment (BDA) dependable reports on targeted targets.

As warfare advances and diversifies, so do drones as intelligence sensors. Drones are cheaper to operate than acquiring images from satellites. They are deployable at short notice, unhindered by cloud cover and generate high resolution images with stand-off range from enemy fire and detection. However, it is important to

note that drones alone do not improve sustainability in war – it is the action taken on the information gathered that makes the impact.

A specialised team must accompany UAVs in daily operations to make sense of aircraft in theatre operations. This is done by processing the collected information, analysing the data provided and making decisions. When the data is analysed and decisions are made timely, the enemy can be maimed before they disappear or achieve their

objectives. A team of experts assists the tactical commander to develop a commensurate attack plan on the spotted enemy.

UAV operators must understand that the preservation of innocent lives and adherence to aviation laws must be prioritised. Qualified UAV operators must undergo regular training and evaluation as well as in-theatre training to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.



KDF troops on a joint patrol with Somali Security Forces conducting aerial surveillance using drones.

# THE ULTIMATE GIFT: A COMBAT ENGINEER'S PERSPECTIVE

By Capt C. K. Njine – 2MIB Engineer Troop Commander



KDF troops during a counter-IED practical training in Sector Two, Dhobley.

“You are the arrowhead, and we must sharpen the arrowhead. We shall do so by providing you with the right tools to perform your duties,” - (Retired General Robert Kibochi).

“The best form of welfare for troops is first rate training,” - (Erwin Rommel -Field Marshall during WW II).

The war against Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) is won by preparing a force through IED disposal training, defeating the device once it is found, and finally attacking the network.

Attacking the network is facilitated by exploiting IED components through forensic analysis. The connecting



A KDF soldier undergoing counter-IED training in Kismayo.



thread between these three facets of winning the war against IEDs is training. Somalia has witnessed an evolution in IED sophistication since the time Al-Shabaab militants chose to use this tactic to attack civilians, soldiers, and equipment.

The evolution is attributed to continuous training offered to soldiers to counter the devices. The earliest recorded switch types used in Somalia were simple victim-operated pressure plates and command wire initiated IEDs which were easy to emplace without much technical know-how and consequently relatively easy to find.

Recent IED finds have shown the use of more complex radio-controlled IEDs, seismic and motion sensor switch types. Whenever soldiers are trained

and equipped to counter a particular IED switch type, militants quickly change tact to another which they think troops have neither been trained nor equipped to deal with.

It is for this reason that 2MIB in Sector VI, in conjunction with other partners such as UNMAS, is training the Somali Security Forces (SSF). Several in-theatre trainings and courses have been undertaken to build the SSF's capacity. These include IED disposal, Conventional Munition Disposal (CMD), route search courses and joint demolition of unexploded ordnances (UXO) among others.

Military training must prepare soldiers to enter harm's way and perform physically and mentally demanding tasks at the highest possible levels

of proficiency. Proficiency stems from knowledge. Knowledge expels fear. This requirement may be the defining characteristic of military training. It can mean the difference between life and death.

The SSF must be at the forefront of the war against IEDs in Somalia. In many ways they already are. Counter-IED trainings through the concerted efforts of various partners have yielded significant results. SSF CIED teams have shown remarkable proficiency in handling all findings. The goal is to provide combat mentorship to the SSF, conduct joint targeted operations to degrade Al-Shabaab, support SSF in route clearance and capacity building of SSF to conduct CIMIC.



A KDF soldier and his Somali Security forces counterpart during a counter-IED practical training in Kismayo.

# A STRATEGIC SHIFT IN DEFEATING AL-SHABAAB

By Maj George Luvai – OC Liaison, Dhobley



KDF troops conducting a joint patrol with Somali Security Forces.

In the complex geopolitical sphere of the Horn of Africa, the fight against Al-Shabaab is of great significance.

A recent operational pivot to empower the Somali Security Forces to lead offensive operations in Jubaland is a strategic evolution crucial to defeat Al-Shabaab.

The foundational premise of this shifting strategy capitalises on exploiting local geography and tacit knowledge. By projecting Somali Security Forces on the frontline, the objective is to leverage their understanding of the physical environment and socio-cultural milieu.

The new strategy implementation was segmented into phases. The initial phase yielded success in Galmudug and Hirshabelle States. Achievements

in these regions have given hope for peace and stability.

The implementation of the new strategy was segmented into phased offensives. The initial phase has yielded

success in Galmudug and Hirshabelle States. Success in these regions has reinvigorated the war-weary population and ignited renewed hope for a peaceful and stable Somalia.



KDF and SSF conduct joint roadblock and search operations.

As the counterinsurgency entered the second phase, continued success hinged on concentrating on the Juba River's strategic axis. The Juba River region, replete with marshlands and thickets, allows for covert movements and becomes a natural barrier against potential assaults. It is also a hideout for Al-Shabaab.

To outmanoeuvre Al-Shabaab requires meticulous planning, precise intelligence, and cooperation between forces. The task ahead is daunting, yet achievable, with a commitment to eradicate Al-Shabaab from their remaining strongholds.

However, to suggest that the military alone will defeat Al-Shabaab is an oversimplification. A comprehensive victory must look beyond the military.

Building on achievements should include post-conflict rehabilitation, humanitarian relief and long-term development plans.

Further, by deploying Somali forces in the lead role, the strategy implicitly mandates capacity building for the troops. Hence, sustained investment in their training, logistical support, infrastructure development and morale boosting becomes indispensable, transcending military engagement mechanics to incorporate nation-building elements.

On a broader scale, strategic alliances and partnerships with international actors must also be recalibrated to align with the evolving directive. The collaborative approach, seen from the perspective of international relations,

reinforces geopolitical equilibrium and propagates a unified front against global terrorism, the importance of which cannot be overstated in the volatile global landscape.

The evolution of the strategy by the KDF and international partners towards engaging the Somali Security Forces on the frontlines of the offensive against Al-Shabaab shows acknowledgement of on-ground realities. This, coupled with a coordinated, multi-dimensional approach to deploying socio-economic revitalisation measures, capacity building programmes and strengthening of international partnerships, could potentially mark an epoch towards Al-Shabaab defeat.



KDF Officers pose for a group photo during the Sector Commander's visit to JISA camp.

# WHY WE FIGHT THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BATTLES

By Capt Annette Munyasia – Psychologist



Capt Annette Munyasia talking to soldiers on mental health and stress management at 'Pumua' Garden in Dhobley.

Human beings are different, and so is their perception of things or events. Hence a people's memory of war is not similar but multicoloured.

Every soldier deployed to Somalia has different memories of the war. Some remember it as a traumatic experience, others see it as a heroic event; while some believe this experience hindered our personal development. But then there are those of us who find it an empowering and stimulating experience.

Our individual memories from the field of combat whether traumatic or not, conforming, or critical are integrated within, designed by, and receive meaning from a shared experience in our mission in Somalia.

The Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) were deployed as one of the Troops Contributing Countries (TCCs) under ATMIS with a mission to implement

the Somali Transition Plan (STP). Each soldier put their life in the line of fire to fulfil this mandate.

Each soldier's memories of our fight in Somalia have become a burden to bear, as well as a badge of honour for their courage. Because every event in our lives alters who we are. Our men and women who served in Somalia will not be the same people when they return home.

So, why endure all these challenges? Why do we still deploy? Why must our families worry constantly about our safety? The simple answer is that we made a commitment to protect our nation, uphold the KDF values and execute assigned tasks and responsibilities. Life is never that simple. In addition to our patriotism, we have needs and desires for ourselves and our dependents that drive us to



Sgt Goldina Kaseru leading a group therapy session in Dhobley FOB



Capt Annette Munyasia and Capt (Dr) Jude Chepng'eno conducting an exposure group therapy to soldiers in Dhobley.

However, not all of us are wise, brave, and diligent enough to learn these skills before we need them. Many of us only realise the need them when we are in pain. We may feel guilt, blame ourselves, and cope poorly, which can harm our performance.

In this brutal conflict, we have given our bodies, minds, and time. As troops, we are proud of our accomplishments. The mental health department under ATMIS II created a training programme to assist our soldiers in cleaning and healing psychological wounds of war. These bruises affect not just individual soldiers, but also loved ones waiting at home for our safe return.

Part of the training borrows from the Battlemind Training module developed at Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR). Battlemind is a soldier's inner strength to overcome adversity, fear, and hardship with confidence and resolve during war. It boils down to psychological resilience.

The program was divided into two parts: pre-deployment and post-deployment training. Pre-deployment battlemind training builds psychological resilience in soldiers, which increases their will and spirit to fight and win, thus lowering combat stress reactions and symptoms.

Post-deployment battlemind training assists the soldier in the transition and

- Targeted Aggression vs. Inappropriate Aggression
- Tactical Awareness vs. Hypervigilance
- Lethally Armed vs. "Locked and Loaded" at Home
- Emotional Control vs. Anger/ Detachment
- Mission Operational Security (OPSEC) vs. Secretiveness
- Individual Responsibility vs. Guilt
- Non-Defensive (combat) Driving vs. Aggressive Driving
- Discipline and Ordering vs. Conflict
- Discipline and Ordering vs. Conflict

The primary tenet of Battlemind Training is that all Soldiers have the abilities required to effectively transition home. The moving home process can be improved by building on the Soldiers' existing capacities and inner mental strengths. Soldiers are shown during the training how their combat capabilities, if not suited for home, can impede their transitioning process. Battlemind training focuses on ten distinct skills, utilizing the acronym B-A-T-T-L-E-M-I-N-D and emphasizing how to avoid difficulties that can arise as Soldiers transition from the battlefield to the home front in a matter of hours.

At the end of our mission as ATMIS II personnel under the Kenyan contingent,

we can say that we came, we conquered, but we also lost our brothers in this war. We lost parts of our happiness to the bloodshed in this conflict. We fought each other in frustration but bonded together when the enemy drew near. We discovered ugly parts of ourselves we did not know existed, but in the same vein found abilities we never knew were in us.

The primary tenet of Battlemind Training is that all soldiers have the abilities required to effectively transition home. The moving home process can be improved by building on soldiers' existing capacities and inner mental strengths. During training, soldiers are shown how their combat capabilities, if not suited to home, can impede their transition process. Battlemind training focuses on ten distinct skills, utilising the acronym B-A-T-T-L-E-M-I-N-D and emphasising how to avoid difficulties as soldiers transition from the battlefield to the home front.

As our as ATMIS II personnel under the Kenyan contingent comes to an end, we can say that we came, we conquered, but also lost our brothers and sisters in this war. We lost part of our happiness to the conflict. We fought each other in frustration but bonded together when the enemy approached. We discovered ugly parts of ourselves we did not know existed, but also discovered abilities we never knew we possessed. We created comradeship with other Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) under ATMIS and collectively worked together to bring peace to our host nation Somalia. We hope that our joy, tears and efforts will go a long way in ensuring the ATMIS mandate in Somalia is fulfilled.

# THE FUTURE SHE: THE TIMELY ENGAGEMENTS AROUND SOMALI WOMEN

By Capt Evans Werungah



Sgt Josephine Nanyokia mentoring a Somali woman on mat making skills.

Amidst the ongoing ATMIS transition, women's participation remains imperative for Somali security independence.

In this context, the Somali girl child plays a pivotal role in discussions regarding economic empowerment and women's welfare.

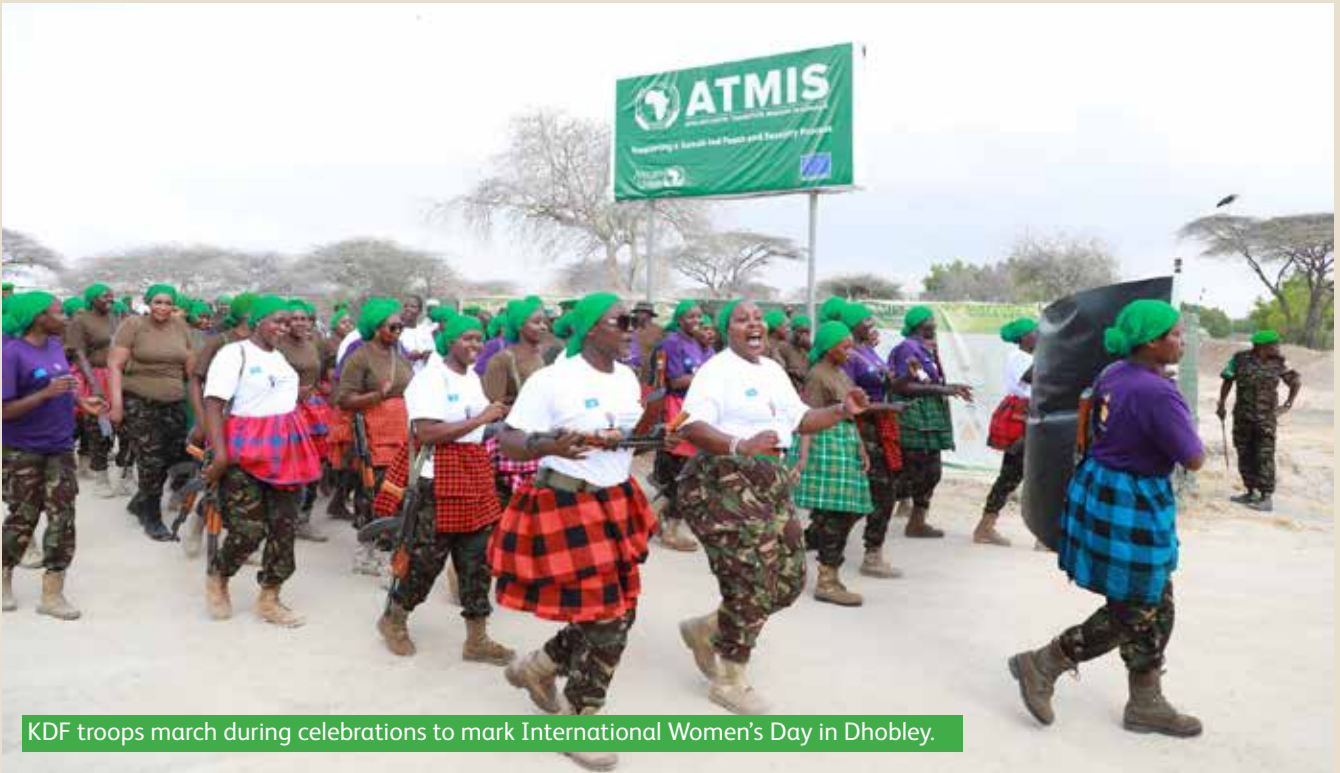
Collaborating closely with local women groups in Dhobley, the Female Engagement Teams (FET) have made substantial strides in mentoring Somali girls across various facets of life.

During the commemoration of the International Day of the Girl Child in October 2023, the FET teams actively engaged with girls from Dhobley Primary School. They focused on gender mainstreaming initiatives.

Naim Mohamed, a member of the Dhobley



A KDF female engagement team donating assorted food items to women groups in Dhobley.



KDF troops march during celebrations to mark International Women's Day in Dhobley.

Women's Association, facilitated a conducive environment for KDF female officers to interact with teenage girls. This session empowered the girls to navigate life's challenges confidently and with dignity.

ATMIS prioritises women and girls' empowerment, addressing crucial health issues such as menstrual cycles with a solid emphasis.

In another significant event, the Female Engagement Teams organised a gender mainstreaming initiative within Dhobley's women groups. They taught them how to make mats – an initiative that empowered them economically.

During the International Women's Day celebrations in March 2023, the vibrant Somali women's culture was showcased through dances and displays. This underscored KDF's commitment to

transforming local women's lives during Somalia's focused phase on self-security and governance.

Various challenges facing women including sexual harassment, forced marriages and domestic violence were addressed thanks to the guidance of Maj. Ruth Omedi, the Gender officer and Commander Sector II Brigadier William Kamoiro.



Female engagement teams discussing Gender Based Violence in Dhobley town.

# WELCOMING BABY AISHA: SOMALIA'S FUTURE THROUGH BABY AISHA'S SMILE

By Maj Ruth Omedi



Maj Ruth Omedi holding newly born baby-Aisha at Level Two Hospital Dhobley.

The inexplicable bond between a mother and her baby is the invisible cord that ties two souls and two hearts into one and remains unbreakable throughout life. It is this unique connection that makes the mother dedicate herself, and sacrifice it all, for the baby's well-being. Just like a mother, the peacekeeper brings forth peace, and goes out of their way to see that communities embrace peaceful coexistence. A peacekeeper would traverse international boundaries, sail across vast seas, fight thousands of miles away from home, and many times pay the ultimate price for peace.

I have served in the Kenya Defence Forces for a couple of years now, and I really enjoy my job. I am a loving wife and mother. I found myself in the most

difficult situation when duty called for me to serve in ATMIS II. This not only meant being away from my loved ones for a long time, but also working in the most risky and unpredictable operational environment.

The motherly instincts in me automatically rejected the idea in totality. But again, I took an oath as a soldier before becoming a mother. How I see my children grow up in peaceful neighbourhoods, freely going about their activities, is what any mother in conflict-afflicted regions like Somalia yearns for their children.

In the complexity of the matter, I decided to serve as a soldier. I wanted to stand for something greater than just me and those close to me. To fight for the helpless, and hopefully, bring

them the most precious gift – a peaceful nation.

It is needless to mention that the goodbyes were painful, and the uncertainties unbearable. Today, however, I celebrate every step we have made towards restoring peace in Somalia. Though my personal contribution may be insignificant in the grand scheme of things, I am confident that I did my fair share. And that I helped build the foundations of a harmonious community. As the officer in charge of the Female Engagement Team (FET) and Gender, my duties and responsibilities revolved around reaching out to women and children within the conflict regions. This was through planned interventions such as; liaising with the medical team for access to essential medical care;



Today, like any other baby born in a non-conflict environment, Aisha smiles contagiously. Her smile is a universal language of joy and hope. Thinking of Somalia through baby Aisha's smile, I feel that there's always beauty and happiness in this country. That despite the enduring conflict and its impacts, Somalia still has the resilience to overcome adversities. It can build a better future for its citizens. This belief does not diminish conflict's profound impact. However, it advocates for every peacekeeper to focus on the existing potentials of peace realisation by viewing Somalia through the smile of young children like baby Aisha. This has been the focus of the FET in Sector II, Dhobley. Every safe delivery, every SGBV victim assisted, and every single woman, child, or youth empowered by learning skills remain feathers in my hat. This makes me proud of my team. Our duty involved a personal touch. In our own unique ways, we went above and beyond to ensure that the

path towards peace in Somalia was curved despite scarce resources. A lot remains to be done. But what we did went a long way to preparing for future interventions. As a peacekeeper, I am limited in what I can offer the local community. But for peace, no effort is too small to acknowledge. As a mother sees the future through her baby's smile, the FET in Sector II Dhobley saw a peaceful Somalia through baby Aisha's smile. They worked towards its realisation.

I believe in a peaceful Somalia. I believe in a prosperous Somalia. Although the gains of our interventions may tarry, there shall be peace and harmony. The laughter of children playing in the fields will fill the air again, because the guns will be silenced. Women will venture out to the market without worrying about their safety, and men will provide for their families in peace.

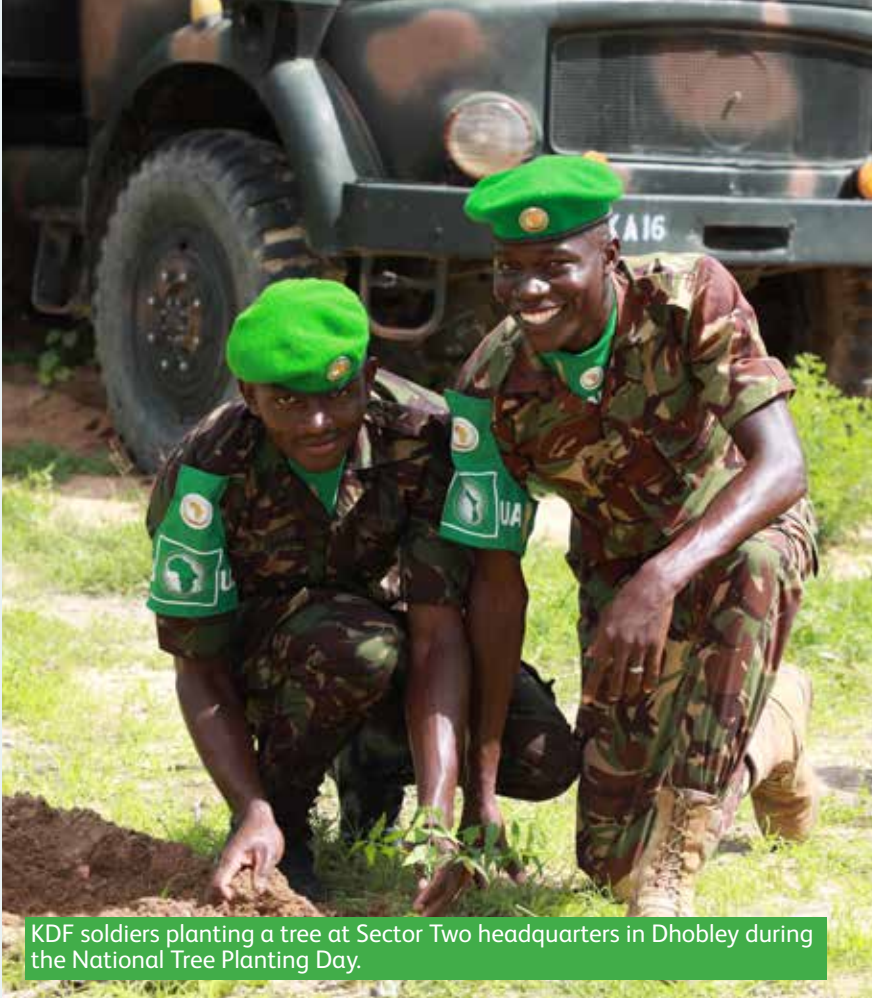
***Here comes a peaceful Somalia...!***



ATMIS Sector Two Deputy Commander Col Adan Safe presents a wheelchair to baby Aisha's mother, after a successful delivery at Level Two Hospital in Dhobley.

# ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION: LEAVING IT BETTER THAN WE FOUND IT

By Cpl Caleb Wefwafwa - Gunner



KDF soldiers planting a tree at Sector Two headquarters in Dhobley during the National Tree Planting Day.

Activities, such as deforestation to clear land for human settlements and farming, as well as charcoal burning for fuel, cause environmental degradation. This leads to an increase in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere contributing to climate change. The end result is rivers drying up, high temperatures, crop failures, unreliable rainfall, water shortages, and air pollution.

Thus, it is essential to change the community mindsets to protect the environment and reverse these trends. This has been achieved through mentorship, training and working in collaboration with the Somalia Security Forces (SSF) and the local community within the area of responsibility, to integrate and create environmental awareness policies to guide the local populations.

ATMIS II troops have conducted joint exercises on how to make a crop nursery, joint planting and maintaining trees to support capacity building initiatives to SSF and the local population.

Tree planting is crucial in reversing the effects of climate change. The more trees you plant around you, the more

hope you have for the future. It has a positive impact on the earth's surface. The healthy environment translates into the well-being of the local community, the beautiful landscape catches the eye, provides good tree cover that break strong winds in mission areas, they also offer shelter for birds and animals. Forests help form rain, which provides water for ATMIS personnel, ecosystems, and the local community.

The KDF launched the Environmental Soldier Programme (ESP) initiative in 2003 to grow more trees to conserve the environment. In fulfilment of the ESP environmental goals, KDF troops under ATMIS II have undertaken tree planting exercises in collaboration



ATMIS Sector Two Commander Brig William Kamoiro plants a tree during the National Tree Planting Day, November 13, 2023.

with AU, UNSOS, SSF, and the local community. This is done by planting trees in Forward Operating Bases (FOBs), including the Kuday FOB. By participating in conservation efforts, the troops contribute to environmental conservation.

In fulfilment of the ATMIS environment action plan to plant 3,000 trees, troops deployed at Kuday FOB, commanded by Major E. L. O Wasonga, have implemented the ESP initiative. The FOB personnel have planted 500 Nezum and Moringa trees which are indigenous to Somalia, of which 300 have been grown within the Kuday area of responsibility.

The initiative aims to make Somalia

a better place than we found it - greener, enjoyable and peaceful - to implement and support the transition plan through interaction with the local community to promote peace and stability to enhance the gradual handover of security responsibilities and leave behind a positive legacy.

Moreover, waste management has also been a challenge in different parts of Somalia due to lack of appropriate ways of waste disposal. This has contributed to the pollution of the environment. To correct this, KDF together with the SSF and the community have jointly established waste disposal mechanisms. This is done by digging waste pits, creating

land fill sites, keeping toilets clean, provision of waste bins for garbage collection and organising environment clean up exercises.

The FOB promotes environmental conservation by hosting activities and tree planting events during KDF commander visits. The quality of the environment contributes to the implementation of the ATMIS II mandate as it impacts troop readiness. In addition, an ideal environment provides cover and camouflage for troops during battle and improves relations with the local community.



ATMIS Deputy Force Commander - Support and Logistics, Maj Gen Peter Muteti plants a tree during an official visit to Dhobley, in October 2023.

# BUILDING A COHESIVE FORCE IN SOMALIA

By Capt Evans Werungah – Public Information Officer, Sector II

Any soldier deployed to Dhobley will remember the Thursday afternoons when everyone takes a breather from the challenging tasks of the Somalia mission.

On this day, you will be able to see someone you may not have seen in a week because of different security roles defending and protecting the Somalis.

It was the known breathing zone, where Mwarubaini trees squeeze out oxygen and every soldier will gasp their share of fresh air. Thanks to Lt Col Okapesi and Father Maj Kaburu for always blessing the garden with anointing water. This is such that the trees will never dry even in the long dry months and the scorching Somali sun.

This is the same ground where Brigadier William Kamoiro, would offer wise counsel and bless the sector and soldiers proceeding on leave, wishing them a safe return to their families.

However much the environment looked relaxed, cool and friendly the soldiers understood the mission at hand. This mission requires them to be combat ready and act promptly to defend and protect themselves. This means they are aware of the national interest and the region at large.

In the realm of military operations especially where soldiers are deployed on a mission outside their country away from their families, camaraderie and effective communication are

indispensable factors that contribute to successful missions and unit cohesion.

The rigours of combat and soldiers' duties often place immense stress on military personnel, impacting mental well-being and morale. However, an innovative approach was birthed in Sector II to address these challenges - the concept of Thursday Counselling and Social Bond Moments, also known as 'Pumua.'

Military personnel are often exposed to high-stress situations that can affect their mental health. The idea of Thursday interactive sessions aimed to alleviate this burden by providing soldiers with dedicated time and space to air their thoughts, concerns and experiences.



WO II Alfred Rono making his remarks during a session at 'Pumua' Garden in Dhobley.

The sessions enabled soldiers to share their emotions, seek guidance, and receive support from their peers and mental health professionals.

Through acknowledging the importance of psychological resilience and providing an outlet for soldiers to ventilate their feelings, Sector Two troops recognised that emotional well-being was just as vital as physical fitness on the battlefield.

Social bonding moments foster unity and connection. Thursdays in the mission area are not only reserved for counselling; they also serve as a

designated day for social bonding.

These intentional opportunities for soldiers to interact in relaxed and non-operational settings are pivotal to strengthening interpersonal connections. Whether it's a shared meal, team-building games like sports, or simply spending time together, these moments offer a vital break, allowing soldiers to bond. As soldiers engage in conversations beyond tactical discussions, they forge friendships and build trust. This enhances their ability to work cohesively as a unit.

In an ever-evolving military landscape,

strategies that prioritise soldiers' mental well-being and foster interpersonal connections are paramount. The concept of 'Pumua' represents a step forward in creating a more resilient and cohesive military force. Moreover, by dedicating time to counselling and social interactions, soldiers in the mission area invest in their holistic development. This ultimately leads to enhanced mission success, unit cohesion and overall well-being.



ATMIS Sector Two Commander Brig William Kamoiro provides counsel to soldiers during a session at 'Pumua' Garden in Dhobley.

# TRACES OF OUR DUTY IN DHOBLEY

By Maj (Fr.) Dominic Savio Kaburu



Lt Col (Rev) Okapesi leads KDF troops in prayer during the interdenominational prayer session in Dhobley.

Challenges are inevitable in life. However, there is no challenge that cannot be overcome, however insurmountable it may seem as long as you are alive.

This article is the story of the indelible footprints that we are proud to leave behind. This is to tell our story to the next generation that we came, we saw, and we conquered. It all started with the parting words of my predecessor as chaplain.

“These ‘Pumua’ benches are already dilapidated, and the dais is dangerously curving in at the base. See what you can do, we have done our best,” he said while pointing to the old benches scattered all over the famous ‘Pumua gardens’. This is where sector meetings and ‘tushauriane’ sessions for spiritual hours were held weekly.

These words also marked the re-

activation of my imaginative way of looking at what I could do to improve on what was already on the ground. It was true that a lot of work was at stake, particularly in repairs and renovations. In addition to the benches, the hall had become an old barn where broken seats and other out-of-use items were stored. Dust from the famous Somalia winds had formed a thick film on the walls of the hall. Spiders were having a field day with their webs all over as well as mice and scorpions to mention but a few. In addition, one had to be careful not to rattle a snake from its hideout- luckily none was discovered.

The container store was even worse. It was full of unnecessary waste that needed to be disposed with everything dumped carelessly inside. These and many other things made me wonder where to begin. The challenges were so intimidating that I even questioned

the outgoing chaplain’s words that they had done their best.

Secondly, being a chaplain, I had no fatigue party. I relied on volunteer soldiers who were not on duty to start off. As the adage goes, slow but sure wins the race because the longest journey begins with the first step. That is how our repairs and renovations at Sector II headquarters began. It was just a matter of time and soon the number of volunteers increased. Many came to lend a hand not because they had nothing to do, but because they wanted to dedicate their services to the work of God - Christians and Muslims alike.

Eventually what started at a slow pace gained momentum. The number of volunteers and support was overwhelming. Support was not just limited to volunteer duties, but also to donations. Having constituted a church

committee, we were able to mobilise well-wishers to fund the already identified projects that included among others, having a permanent slab on the Pumua dais in place of the wooden slab that was dangerously curving inwards, fitting floor tiles as well as purchasing timber and nails to have permanent benches replace the dilapidated ones.

It is worth noting with gratitude that we also got financial support for the repair work from both Muslims and the Anglican church. We hit the road running and started the repairs once the donations came in. Looking back, one cannot help but admire the fruits of the many volunteers' efforts. 'Pumua' garden has now received a facelift with a permanent slab with a fully tiled floor and permanent benches held firmly with concrete on the floor. In addition, it has been repainted, thanks to the expertise of volunteers. It is indeed an awesome sight to behold.

Eventually, the hall was cleared and cleaned to perfection. The container

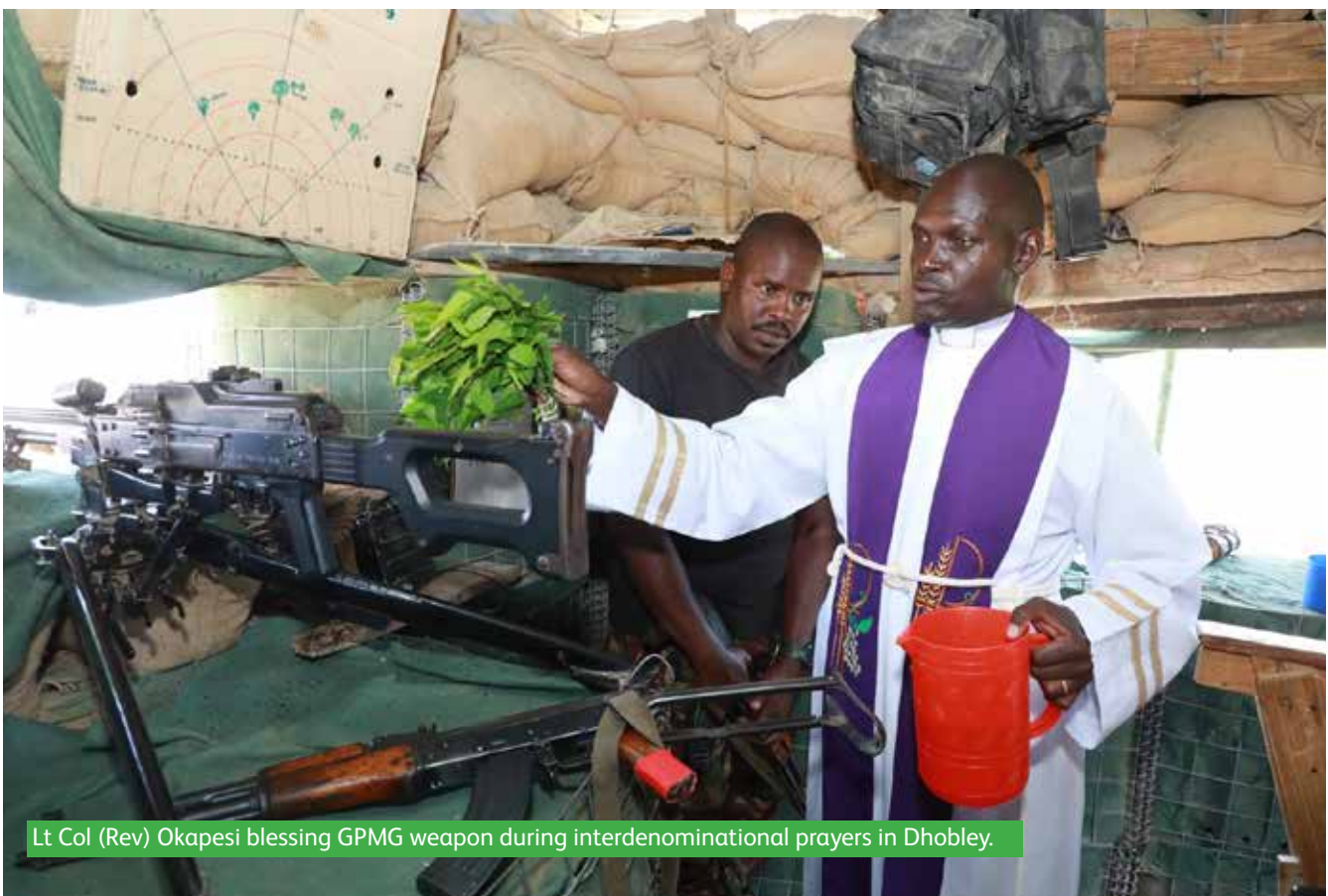
store was also cleaned and properly arranged. A church kitchen was built with a modern cooking area and a kitchen garden. It is here that for the first time in this sector we could grow and enjoy fresh maize, vegetables, sweet potatoes and watermelon. To date, the kitchen garden has continued to supply the sector with green vegetables all year round. We have planted trees around the church compound which makes it evergreen and cool.

The milestone of it all was the extension of the Hesco barriers to expand the perimeter fence around the church compound. This was to make it independent of the 'Pumua' Gardens. It was an uphill task since the already filled Hesco bags had to be emptied and moved for setting and refilling. This was done with bare hands and shovels but true to volunteerism, the work was completed. We have set an ambience of solemnity around the church with benches under tree shades for the faithful to use for reflection and

meditation as well as relaxing after service. We have also installed tap water around the church. The Hesco barriers perimeter fence has restored the church compound as a sacred place of worship and ensured an ambience of solemnity.

Looking back now, I see a testament to the labour that speaks for itself. One of my many teachers of long memory used to echo these words to us, "A teacher ought to teach the minds and touch the hearts of students."

Today, I testify that the same is true for those we have worked with. We have taught and touched the hearts of people regardless of religion. The fact that the volunteers included both Christians (Anglicans, Catholics) and Muslims is by itself a testament that we are a family well-knit on military values and together we have left behind us a roadmap of unity dotted with indelible footprints for others to benchmark on.



Lt Col (Rev) Okapesi blessing GPMG weapon during interdenominational prayers in Dhobley.

# CHARLIE COMMANDOS SECOND TOUR IN KISMAYO

By Maj Moris Andande – OC Old Airport



Kenya Army Commander Lt Gen Peter Njiru and other Senior Officers during a visit to Old Airport FOB at Kismayo in August 2023

Charlie Combat Team of the 2 Mechanised Infantry Battalion (MIB) took over ATMIS duties at Old Airport FOB Kismayo on 26 February 2023 from E CT-7 KR.

The CT was in Diif FOB for close operations prior to deployment in deep operations. Having operated in similar climatic conditions, the team was already well adapted to the weather in the Area of Responsibility (AOR).

The troops' morale was high because quite a number had been in Kismayo during Operation Sledge Hammer to liberate Kismayo town. Deployment to the exact location of the beach landing during Operation Sledge Hammer brought back memories.

Charlie Combat Team's vision is to have a cohesive, well-disciplined, and highly motivated sub-unit that performs all tasks professionally as individuals, teams and collectively to achieve the overall intent of the CO 2 MIB.

This being the second tour of duty in Kismayo, the CT continued to play a crucial role in defeating Al-Shabaab in deep operations in the AOR, support

and cooperate with security forces within the AOR in maintenance of order and provision of humanitarian and civil assistance to guarantee peace and security.

On our second tour of duty, there was an overall positive change in Kismayo in the following key areas.

Firstly, infrastructure development. During our first tour of duty with AMISOM II, there were few kilometres of tarmac road compared to the current expansion of tarmac roads. This is especially within the Kismayo Central Business District. The old ruins have been renovated and occupied. There is also a surge in high-rise buildings.

Secondly, there were few schools during AMISOM II compared to expanded education facilities in ATMIS II. The number of pupils and students in schools has also increased. Many more infrastructure projects for schools are coming up. This is an indication that our presence since Kismayo's capture in 2012 has encouraged learning and denied the Al-Shabaab avenues of recruitment.

In addition, under the Environmental Soldier Programme (ESP), troops have planted trees and conserved habitats. Unlike the first tour where locals cut trees for charcoal, we hardly observed such activities during our second tour.

On security matters, during our second tour of duty, the area recorded a significant reduction in hostile Al-Shabaab activities. This is due to the concerted efforts of ATMIS troops and Somalia Security Forces. One can clearly observe improved discipline in SSF especially in weapon handling as compared to the previous tour.

ATMIS troops in Sector Six have had a positive impact. The streets of Kismayo city show the possibility of a peaceful and stable economic climate. As a result of KDF's eleven years of dedicated work and sacrifice, all these positive changes have been achieved. As we prepare to exit, people's lives have been impacted in a positive way. Hospitality has been developed with locals attributing this conducive environment to our role. These changes clearly indicate that Somalia is on the right track to self-sufficiency and good governance.

Sites of Kismayo town's infrastructural development following the restoration of peace by ATMIS troops.





# LASTLY IN SOMALIA: THE LAND I YEARNED TO VISIT

By WOII (Rev.) Frigustus Mutunga



WO II (Rev.) Frigustus Mutunga counselling soldiers during a session at 'Pumua' Garden.

On Thursday 4 December 2014 while working on one of the bases in Kenya with other technicians, we prepared our aircraft for a mission to Somalia.

The aircraft which refuelled at the Wajir Air Base ready for the mission, successfully made the first flight to Somalia. However, during the second mission, the aircraft developed some technical problems crashing in the general area of Jilib, deep inside Somalia. It was the worst day for us as flight technicians and specifically for me because I had prepared the kite for the mission that morning (pre-flight checks). This was the day all the technicians and Flying Officers wanted to come to Somalia to recover the wrecked kite plus the pilot. Since that day, I looked forward to stepping on Somali soil.

In January 2022, I received a calling from God the Almighty to abandon my spanners and take the Bible. I therefore changed my trade from aircraft technician to church catechist. I was later attached to the 2nd Brigade in preparation for ATMIS II duties in Somalia. Our movement from Wajir to Dhobley was on 14 January 2023. Immediately I alighted from the vehicle at the transit area, I knelt down and touched Somali soil. I prayed to God to give us peace during our tour of duty.

I also prayed for all the souls who shed their blood in the mission area. I prayed for many young women who have been left widows, many children left fatherless and parents who lost their dear sons and daughters and other gallant foreign soldiers.

Previously, I repaired and maintained F-5 A/C engines. However, now I must pray, preach and counsel our soldiers on the battlefield. Some of the soldiers in the operation areas are sometimes stressed, traumatised and in dire need of spiritual guidance and counselling. Most of our young female soldiers have left their young husbands with infants. They need our guidance and assurance as spiritual leaders and fathers that God cares for their families.

I pray that I will always have the zeal and energy. Indeed, PRAYER IS A SILENT POWERFUL MACHINE GUN

In KDF we all believe in a supernatural all-powerful being or force. This is either God for Christians or Allah for Muslim faithful. We communicate to our God through prayers. In prayers we make



ATMIS Sector Two Commander Brig William Kamoiro and other KDF soldiers during interdenominational prayers in Dhobley.

our thanksgiving and requests known to God. We therefore trust God who is our Father. He is the God of soldiers (Mungu wa Majeshi).

The ATMIS II command structure, which extends from the Commander Sector II to the rest of the soldiers has prioritised prayers in all their mission readiness operations.

Every day there is a prayer warrior team on duty praying for our camp, soldiers on patrol, soldiers on KATA JASHO, those Manning OPs and those on office duties. The warrior team prays for our commanders that God may direct them as they lead this mighty army. The

commander has also authorised us to meet in our places of worship for fellowship and corporate prayers.

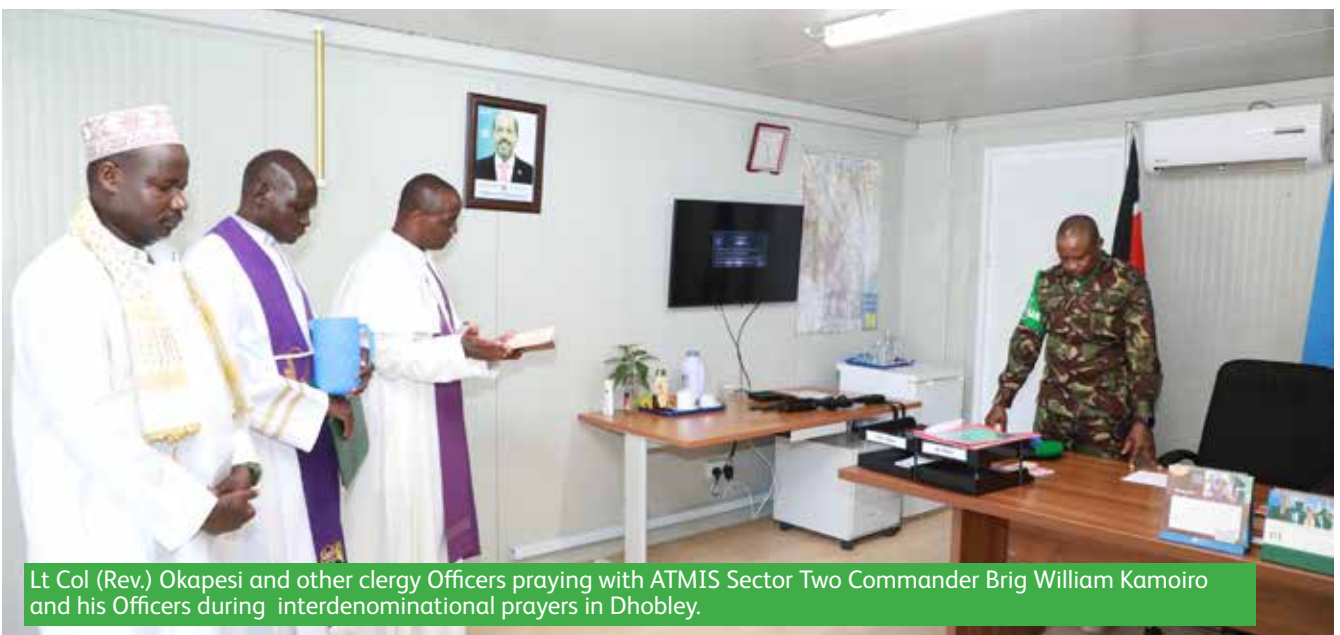
In Exodus 17:8-15, the Amalekites (Al-Shabaab) attacked the Israelites (KDF), Moses being the spiritual leader/commander) instructed Joshua (Sector II Commander) to choose men (KDF soldiers) to march and fight the Amalekites. Verse 11 says, As Moses (the spiritual leader) held up his hands (in prayer) the Israelites (KDF) were winning. When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it (persistence in prayer). Aaron and Hur held his hands up (other

faithful's support in prayer) so that his hands remained steady till sunset (End of Mission).

Prayer is silent but a very powerful weapon for ATMIS II's victory and success. In this mission, we need prayers more than ever before.

We pray for ATMIS II for:

- Victory against any threat of ALSHABAAB.
- Disorganise the plans of ALSHABAAB.
- Peace in Somalia.
- Pray for all our Commanders at all levels as they lead, direct and guide this great army.



Lt Col (Rev.) Okapesi and other clergy Officers praying with ATMIS Sector Two Commander Brig William Kamoiro and his Officers during interdenominational prayers in Dhobley.

# A KDF SOLDIER'S 'ENEMY NUMBER TWO' IN SOMALIA

By WO1 Samuel Mitei – Afmadhow FOB

The enemy number one for a KDF soldier in Somalia is Al-Shabaab. The second enemy is scorpions. There is no soldier who has been in close or deep operations that doesn't know what a scorpion is. For many years I have heard about scorpion stings commonly known by soldiers as 24 because of its intense pains which lasts for 24 hours.

In my first month of deployment at Afmadhow Forward Operating Base (FOB), I was stung twice by a scorpion, hence my motivation to write about this deadly creature.

Mostly found in desert areas, let me describe a scorpion by saying it has eight legs and is easily recognised by a pair of grasping pincers and a narrow, segmented tail curved over the back and always ending with a deadly sting.

Al-Shabaab and scorpions share similar characteristics.

Mode of attack	Al-Shabaab	Scorpions	Precaution
Ambushes	Thickly vegetated areas Road bends Road junctions	Body amours. Ballistic helmets. Uniforms. Sleeping bags. Large bags.	Probing the area commonly known as 'kuchemsha' area for Al-Shabaab. For scorpions do a vigorous shake out of the items and early mounting of mosquito nets by 17:30 hrs.
Night attacks	They attack under the cover of darkness	Scorpions are nocturnal, therefore they come out at night in search of food i.e., all insects and spiders	Avoid night movements, if a must use protective gear such as boots
Cover from view	Bushes and long grass if around the defence	Bushes and long grasses around the defence.  Lots of luggage under the bed	If seen endeavour to kill to avoid attacking you or your buddy again

Scorpions reproduce sexually, and after twelve months of gestation, their females give birth to scorpions, which range in size from 20 to 47. They cling to their mothers' backs until they are two weeks old, after which they live on their own. However, Al-Shabaab conducts their recruitment and training for an unknown period before being deployed.

To prevent scorpion attacks locally, people, sprinkle used oil, diesel and paraffin around their drenches or offices. However, to prevent Al-Shabaab from approaching our defences we conduct day and night patrols and do a lot of aerial surveillance with the help of drones.

Unlike Al-Shabaab, which kills, there is however nothing to worry about a scorpion sting. It is extremely painful but rarely life-threatening.

