

Somalia: US Covert Operations (2001-2016)

By [The Bureau of Investigative Journalism](#)

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US and UK covert operations in Somalia

The Pentagon's Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) is the lead agency in the covert 'war on terror' in Somalia, although the CIA also has a strong regional presence.

The US has been carrying out extensive covert military operations inside Somalia since 2001, as a [major six-part investigation](#) by the US Army Times recently revealed.

Elite troops from the Pentagon's JSOC are routinely deployed on the ground for surveillance, reconnaissance, and assault and capture operations. In June 2011, the US began carrying out drone strikes in Somalia. JSOC has its own fleet of armed Reaper drones, which are flown from various bases in the region.

The CIA also [operates a secret base at Mogadishu airport](#), according to a detailed investigation by Jeremy Scahill at The Nation. Unarmed US surveillance drones also regularly fly from the airport, according to a well-informed Bureau source. While some of these are part of the US 'war on terror', many provide support for peacekeeping operations in the region.

The US's primary target is currently al Shabaab, the militant group which controls much of the country's south. On February 9 2012, al Qaeda leader Ayman al Zawahiri announced that al Shabaab had formally become [a franchise of al Qaeda](#).

In recent years, both Kenya and [Ethiopia](#) have invaded parts of Somalia, the latter allegedly with the military aid of the US. JSOC forces are reported to have taken advantage of these events to carry out more intensive operations against militants, often using helicopters, airstrikes, AC-130 gunships and "boots on the ground".

Key reports of operations in Somalia

The Bureau has collated credible reports of known covert operations and other events in Somalia relating to the 'war on terror'. These are drawn from major international news media and agencies, political and military memoirs and papers, and academic research. All sources are transparently presented.

Given the nature of covert operations and the difficulties in reporting from Somalia, the Bureau understands that this is an incomplete record. We welcome corrections and additions.

Covert US operations, Somalia 2001-2016		
	US drone strikes	Additional US attacks
Total reported strikes:	32-36	9-13
Total reported killed:	242-418	59-166
Civilians reported killed:	3-12	7-47
Children reported killed:	0-2	0-2
Total reported injured:	5-24	11-21

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