

UPDF launches fresh attack against Shabaab

By Vision Reporter

Uganda People's Defence Force and Somalia army have launched a massive operation to flush out al-Shabaab militants in Lower Shabelle region and secure the main supply routes in the area.

According to Lt. Col. Israel Kaheru Bagenda, the commanding officer of 2nd Infantry Battalion of UPDF, the operation will be conducted in phases by both African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and Somali National Army (SNA) troops.

Lt Col Bagenda said the exercise was launched following information that al-Shabaab militants were destabilising areas along Afgooye-Balidoole road, Afgooye town, mainly around Elasha Biyaha- Mogadishu road and surrounding areas of Jambalulu, Baghdad and Basra.

"The purpose of today's operation is to ensure that we wipe out al-Shabaab elements in these areas and of course, support the Somali national security forces who are already moving ahead of us in the operation," he said.

Joint Operations

AMISOM and SNA troops have been conducting joint operations in various parts of the country to drive out the

militants and liberate regions under their control.

Lt Col Bagenda, who is also the field operations commander, said the operation is to ensure that the main supply routes connecting other region to Mogadishu are secured to allow free movement of goods and services.

The exercise, he added, will also improve security in the adjacent areas to enable residents live in peace.

Bagenda said the soldiers were committed to securing Somalia and had played a major role in the stabilisation process.

"The SNA is on course. Their morale is high and that is why they were able to accept to move ahead of us and whatever we do is to support them," he said according to a release from AMISOM information office Afgooye, Somalia.

The field operations commander's sentiments were echoed by the spokesman of the UPDF contingent, Maj Robert Kamara, who said the operations will continue until al-Shabaab is defeated.

"We must send a clear message to the militants wherever they are, that we will not allow them to sneak back to cause havoc in areas we have made peaceful. Our operations today were intended to warn al-Shabaab that wherever they are, we will be there," Maj

Kamara said.

Security co-operation

While in Kampala last month, Somalia President Mohammed Abdullahi revealed that talks with his counterpart President Yoweri Museveni centred on a final assault against al-Shabaab terrorists and security cooperation.

According to President

Abdullahi, the key points of agreement were security co-operation and the need to launch a new joint offensive against the terrorists.

President Abdullahi's visit to Uganda on October 22, was the first since the deadly terrorists' bombings in Mogadishu that claimed over 400 people on October 14.

The president said: "The

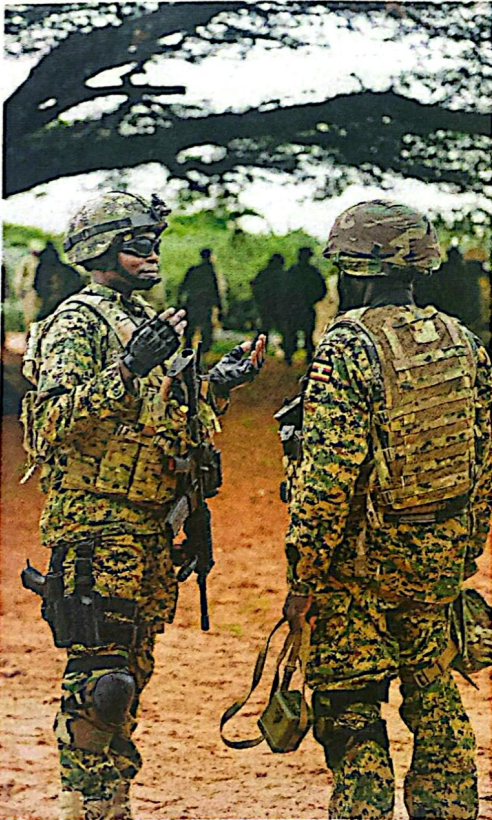
attack shows that we have not done enough to stop al-Shabaab."

Over 22,000 troops are deployed under the AMISOM.

Uganda which was the first country to deploy troops in Somalia in 2007, with over 5,000 soldiers.

In August, al-Shabaab militants killed 12 UPDF soldiers in an ambush as

they patrolled Bulumale and Beladami in Lower Shabelle region, south west of Mogadishu. An inquiry into the circumstances that led to the ambush that claimed 12 soldiers was launched by Uganda, but the report is yet to be made public. Kenya, Burundi and Djibouti are the other troop-contributing countries under AMISOM.



Ugandan soldiers serving under AMISOM, prepare to conduct operations to flush out remnants of al Shabaab from the suburbs of Afgooye town, Lower Shabelle region, Somalia, on Sunday



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