

Children Are Among the Dead After a U.S.-Backed Raid in Somalia

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By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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MOGADISHU, Somalia — Ten civilians, including three children, were killed in a raid by foreign and Somali forces on a farm in southern [Somalia](#), a deputy governor said Friday. The United States military confirmed that it had supported a counterterrorism operation in the area, and said it would look into the allegations.

The deaths raise questions about growing American military involvement in Somalia after President Trump approved expanded operations, often in support of Somali forces, against the [Shabab](#), an extremist group linked to Al Qaeda.

The farmers were killed “one by one” after soldiers stormed into the village, Barire, early Friday, the deputy governor of the Lower Shabelle region, Ali Nur Mohamed, told reporters in the capital, Mogadishu.

Somalia’s Information Ministry at first said that the raid had killed eight Shabab fighters and that the extremists had begun shooting at Somali forces, adding that “no civilians were harmed or killed.” A corrected statement said that “it appears that there were different security operations” in the area.

Three children ages 8 to 10 and a woman were among the dead, the deputy governor said. Their bodies were laid out in a grassy courtyard, wrapped in blankets. Bodies of civilians, especially those killed in misdirected attacks, are often taken from remote areas to Mogadishu to draw media attention.

“These local farmers were attacked by foreign troops while looking after their crops,” Mr. Mohamed told reporters. “The troops could have arrested them, because they were unarmed, but instead shot them one by one mercilessly.”

The United States Africa Command confirmed that American forces had supported the Somalia National Army while it conducted an operation in the area, but it offered no details.

“We are aware of the civilian casualty allegations near Barire, Somalia,” the command said in a statement. “We take any allegations of civilian casualties seriously, and per standard, we are conducting an assessment into the situation to determine the facts on the ground.”

The Shabab, the deadliest Islamist extremist group in Africa, hold vast areas of rural Somalia after being chased out of major cities in recent years by a multinational African Union force and Somali forces. The group continues to threaten the fragile central government and carry out deadly attacks in neighboring countries, notably Kenya.

This year, Mr. Trump approved expanded military operations against the Shabab, including allowing more aggressive airstrikes and declaring parts of southern Somalia areas of active hostilities.

The United States and Somalia in recent weeks said strikes had killed the Shabab leaders responsible for planning and executing deadly attacks in Mogadishu, where hotels and military checkpoints are often attacked with bombs.