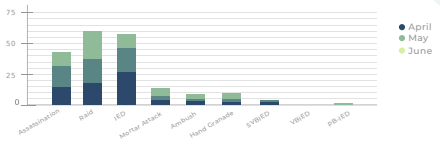
THE SOMALI WAR
IN THE FIRST HALF OF 2020

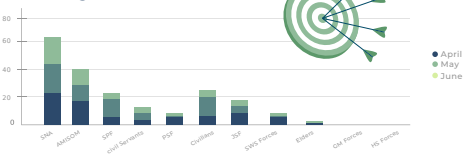
The year 2020 had started with al-Shabab increasingly on the defensive but still very active offensively, as it had been subjected to a concerted effort by the allies conducting raids into the group's strongholds. By the first quarter of the year, the group had lost its main gateways into the capital and the places through which it used to collect taxes and adjudicate its affairs there. By the second quarter, while it managed to maintain its urban operations, it failed to match its previous successes in conducting complex and S/VBIED attacks. In order to mitigate that loss, it switched to IED attacks. Furthermore, it has used its limited SVBIED attacks to support military operations or to attempt to assassinate high profile threats, which suggests that it still has the capability but lacks opportunity and worthwhile targets.

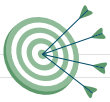
AS incidents Q2 2020



Al-Shabab operations the first half of 2020 are almost at the same level as the same time last year. However, the second quarter of 2020 shows a significant slowing of its tempo. For instance, assassinations this quarter were 47 -- the same number as the last quarter; however, in 2019, assassinations increased in the second quarter to 39, from 33 the previous quarter. Similarly, direct military attacks by AS against allied installations and positions were 46 this quarter, which is the same as last quarter. This itself is another indication of AS's slowing tempo, because it managed to increase its raids against the allies in the second quarter of 2019 to 51 from 41 the quarter before that, while its campaign is stalled this year

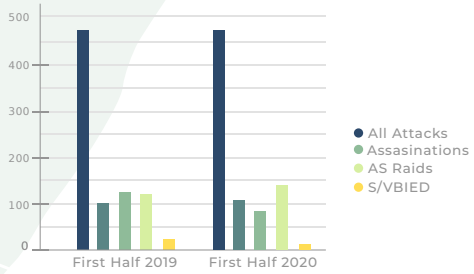
AS targets



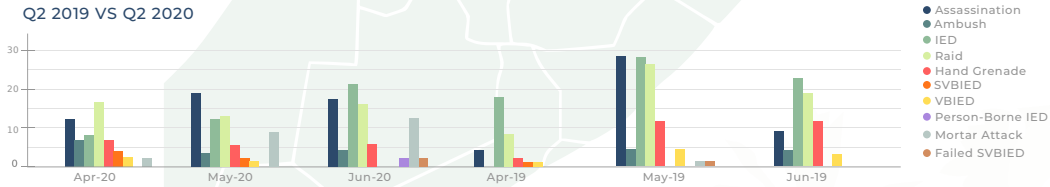


The group's main target continues to be the SNA and AMISOM. Its second priority is the Somali police force and civil servants working for the FGS and the FMSs. Its main focus among the FMSs is Jubaland, where it increased its attacks, trying to capitalise on that FMS's worsening relations with the FGS and Ethiopia. AS seems to have exploited the reduction in Ethiopian operations in support of Jubaland to bolster its forces in the region and increase its pressure on the forces of that FMS. It also continues to target the elders that had refused to heed its amnesty offer. The police and civilians are targeted by pistol assassinations and sticky IEDs attached to their vehicles. Lone SNA officers are also assassinated in this manner, although the main targets of this campaign seem to be civil servants and police officers.

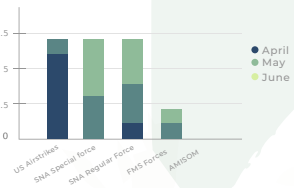
Compare 2019-2020



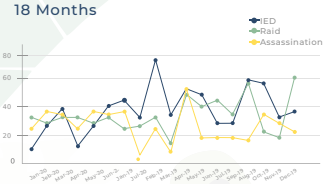
Q2 2019 VS Q2 2020



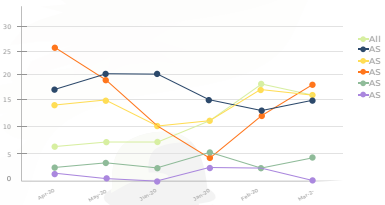
Allies Ops Q1 & Q2



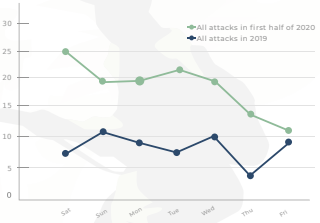
18 Months



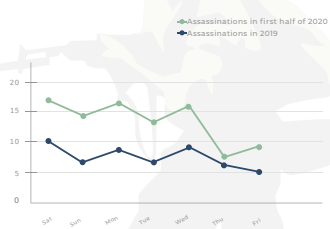
Allied versus AS



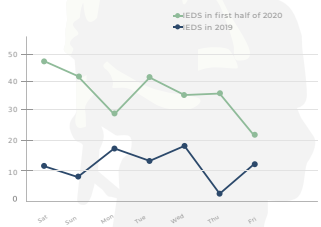
All Attacks by day



Assassinations by day

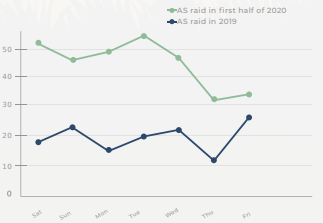


IEDS by day

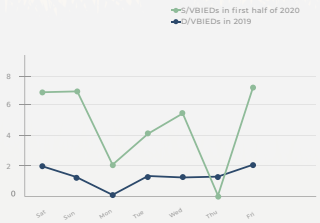


There is a pattern to the attacks by AS each week1 it tends to be most active just before the weekend and after the weekend in urban areas. In the rural areas, it is most active during midweek. The reason is that there are fewer targets during the weekend in the urban areas, as potential targets stay at home or change their schedule. Assassinations are lowest during the weekends and highest on Saturdays, the first day of the week, as targets make their way to and

AS raid by day



S/VBIEDs by day



Conclusion

The first half of this year saw the tempo of AS operations stalled, but continuing steady on its deadly path. Unfortunately, this slow in tempo may not continue past the return of government workers to fulltime work following the social distancing that necessitated many of them to work from home. With increased movement of potential targets, the group may get the opportunity to continue its deadly urban campaign. As noted in our last quarterly report, the group is pivoting towards more usage of suicide bombers using explosive vests in urban areas, and away from SVBIED attacks. As such, it has conducted one such attack this quarter. There is a heightened risk of such attacks during the rest of the year.