



## U.S. Security Assistance to Kenya Amidst Controversy over Drones

Security Assistance Monitor, December 2020

### What's At Issue

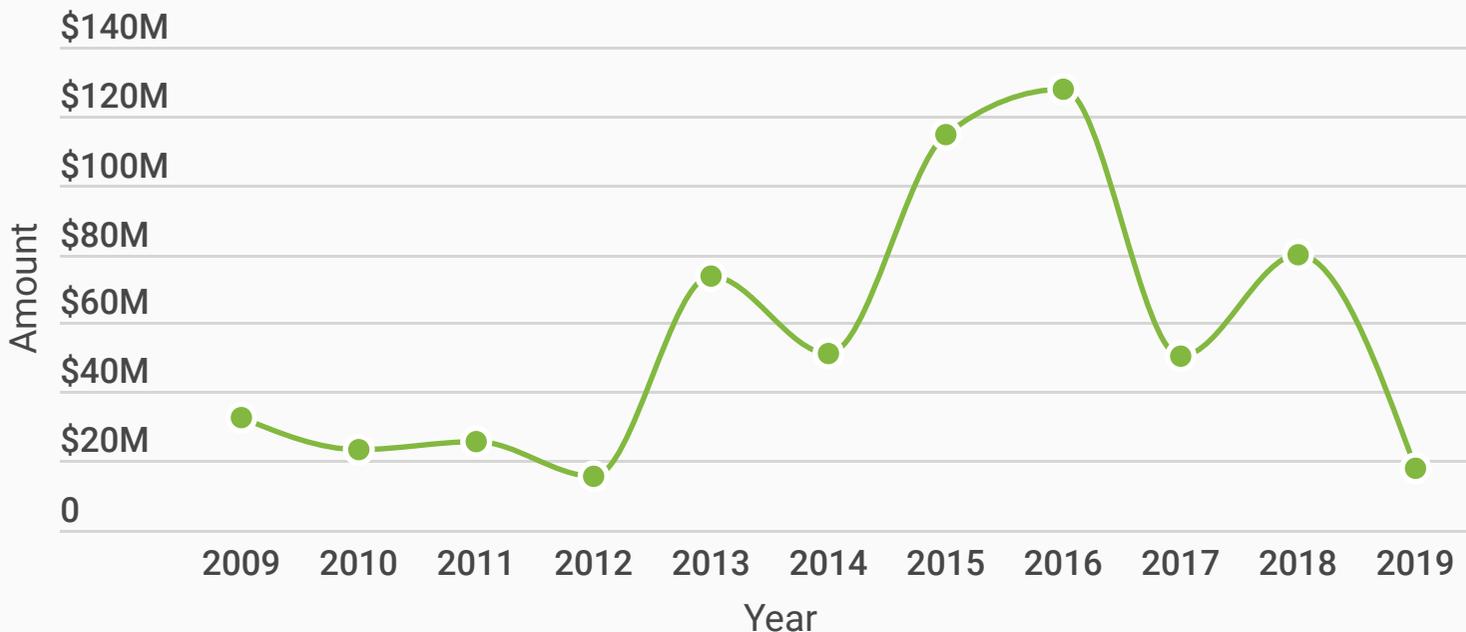
The U.S. is considering expanding AFRICOM's authorities to conduct drone strikes in majority-Muslim counties in eastern Kenya that border Somalia targeting al-Shabaab despite questions regarding the efficacy of such a strategy, its impact on civilians in the region and its legality under Kenyan law.

### Security Assistance to Kenya in Context

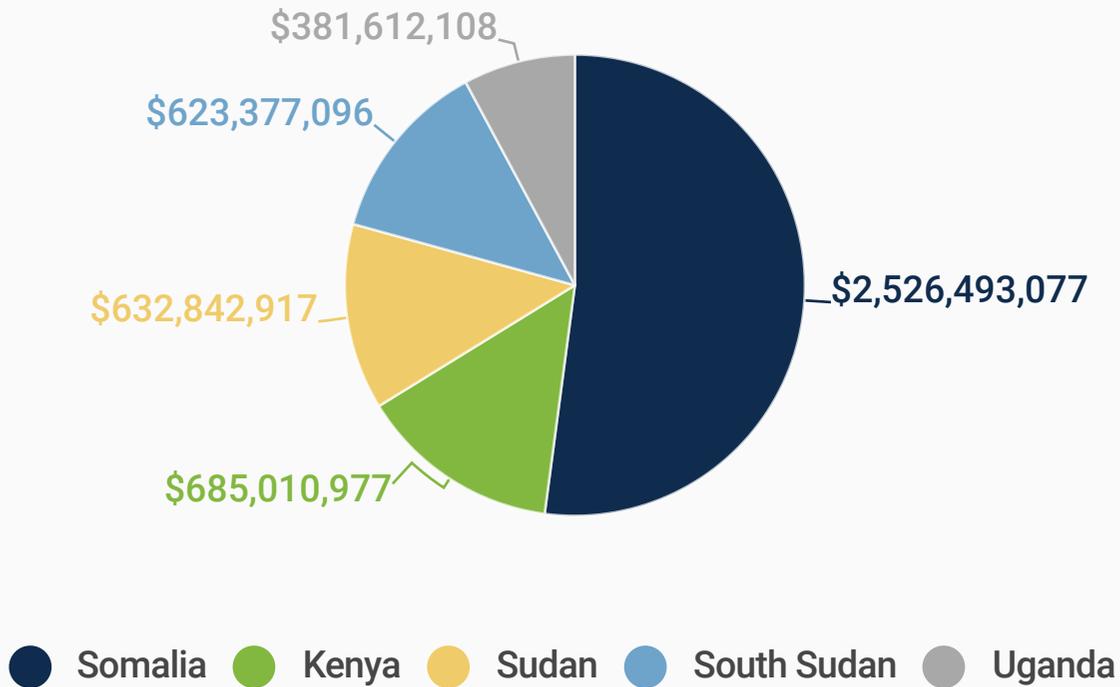
Counterterrorism operations in East Africa have become a central part of U.S. strategic engagement in the region and security cooperation with Kenya targeting al-Shabaab has been a cornerstone of that pursuit. However, al-Shabaab's resilience in Somalia, and its ability to strike at targets in Kenya and Uganda illustrates its enduring presence, and suggests deficiencies in the current U.S. engagement in Somalia's civil war. Nevertheless, in a bilateral meeting with Kenyan officials at the White House earlier this year, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta allegedly asked President Trump for additional counterterrorism assistance, specifically "armed aerial support". Kenyatta subsequently told France 24 News that he would not accept U.S. drone strikes inside Kenya and that the Americans had made no such request.

The January attack on a U.S. base at Manda Bay, Kenya, that left 3 Americans dead, prompted the U.S. military's Africa Command (AFRICOM) to pursue new authorities to expand its areas of operations beyond al-Shabaab's Somali strongholds to parts of eastern Kenya, despite long held concerns regarding the effectiveness of the U.S. counterterrorism campaign and its impact on civilians. An investigation by Amnesty International found that 21 civilians were killed and 11 others were injured in just nine of the nearly 200 US airstrikes in Somalia between 2017 and 2020. Moreover, absent a political and diplomatic strategy to address underlying drivers of conflict on Somalia, and with the announcement of a U.S. troop withdrawal from the country, an expanded air campaign risks exacerbating violence without any clear path to a sustainable peace.

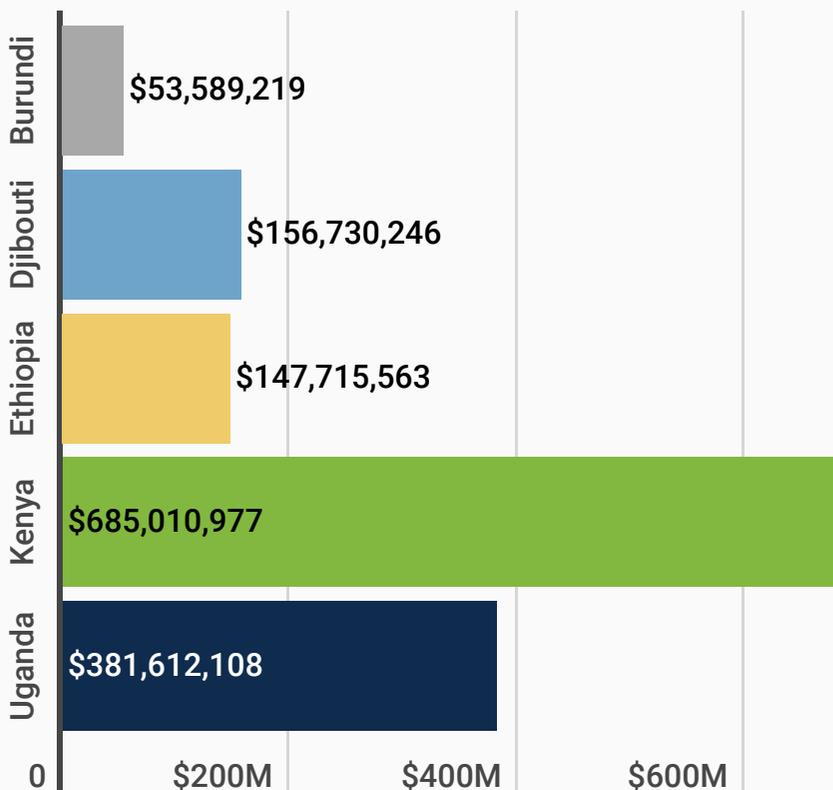
### U.S. Security Assistance to Kenya (FY2015-2019)



### Top 5 U.S. Security Sector Assistance Recipients in East Africa (FY2001-2019)



### U.S. Security Assistance to AMISOM Troop Contributing Countries (FY2011-2019)



#### AMISOM Operations

Created in 2007, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is an active, regional peacekeeping mission operated by the African Union and approved by the UN. Its mandate includes several strategic objectives: gradual transfer of security responsibilities to Somali forces, threat reduction of al-Shabaab and other armed opposition groups, and political assistance to ensure peace-building efforts.

Though AMISOM has contributed to important central government gains over the past decade, including extending some form of control over major urban centers, peace in Somalia remains illusive, with Al-Shabaab and other armed groups still operating across the country and in control of vast swaths of its southern regions. AMISOM remains under-resourced, and has been accused of a number of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses. [al humanitarian law and human rights abuses.](#)