

U.S. launches airstrike in Somalia

By Mohamed Olad Hassan, Associated Press Writer | Monday, March 03, 2008 | No comments posted. Font Size: [A](#) [A](#)

MOGADISHU, Somalia — The U.S. launched an airstrike today on a Somali town held by Islamic extremists to go after a group of terrorist suspects, U.S. defense officials said.

Three missiles hit Dobley, a town four miles from the Kenyan border, destroying a home and seriously injured eight people, police and witnesses said. The remnants of an Islamic force that had once ruled much of southern Somalia took over Dobley last week.

"It was a deliberate, precise strike against a known terrorist and his associates," one U.S. military official said in Washington, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to comment on the record.

He gave few other details, except to say the targets were believed staying in building known to be used regularly by terrorist suspects.

Last year, the U.S. shelled suspected al-Qaida targets in Somalia, using gunfire from a U.S. Navy ship off the shore of the east African nation.

"We woke up with a loud and big bang and when we came out we found our neighbor's house completely obliterated as if no house existed here," a resident of the town, Fatuma Abdullahi, told The Associated Press. "We are taking shelter under trees. Three planes were flying over our heads."

A police officer said the eight wounded were hit by shrapnel. An aid worker in Dobley said up to six people were still trapped in the rubble by midday. It was not clear whether these victims were included in the police officer's tally.

"A minimum of two bombs were dropped," said the aid worker, who asked that his name not be used because he is not authorized to speak to the media. The worker spoke to the AP by telephone. "Between four and six people are in the rubble."

Clan elder Ahmed Nur Dalab said a senior Islamic official, Hassan Turki, was in town Sunday to mediate between his fighters and a militia loyal to the government. Turki's forces took over Dobley last week.

In early 2007, Somali troops and their Ethiopian allies drove out a radical Islamic group to which Turki is allied that had taken over much of southern Somalia.

The Islamic forces have fought to regain power, and appear to be gathering momentum again in recent weeks. On Monday, the group overran Bur Haqaba — a strategic hilltop town about 37 miles from the provincial capital of Baidoa that had been one of the group's main bases in the south. They released prisoners from jail and killed a police chief before retreating, witnesses said.

Last month, they briefly took over the southern Somalia town of Dinsor, killing nine government soldiers.

Somalia has been mired in chaos since 1991, when warlords overthrew dictator Mohamed Siad Barre and then turned on each other.

— AP writer Pauline Jelinek contributed to this report from Washington.

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