NEEDS DRIVEN. PEOPLE CENTRED.

SIGACT BRIEF

MIA MORTAR ATTACK – 01 JANUARY 2019

01 January 2019

UNMAS | SOMALIA

Executive Summary

- At approximately 14:15EAT on 01 January 2019, al Shabaab fired seven (7) mortar rounds towards the United Nations compound of Mogadishu International Airport.
- The rounds impacted inside the perimeter of the compound, inflict two injuries and significant damages to soft infrastructure.
- The attack was reportedly launched from Dharkenley's Kaxda neighbourhood, located approximately 4.5km north-north west of the United Nations compound.
- The type of mortar used on 01 January 2019 was similar to the one used on 01 July 2018 against the United Nations compound of Mogadishu International Airport.
- The calibre of the mortar rounds fired on 01 January 2019 and 01 July 2018 is 81mm. The tail fins recovered after both attacks showed the ignition cartridges of the mortar rounds were L33A1 cartridges, used to fire 81mm mortar ammunition.
- Unverified post-blast investigation reports suggest one of the rounds included phosphorus (incendiary round).
- The serial numbers of some of the rounds recovered on 01 January 2019 and on 01 July 2018 match. Some of the rounds most likely originated from the same batch of ammunition.
- Al Shabaab claimed responsibility within 15 minutes from the attack, leaving no reasonable grounds to suspect the involvement of any other threat actor.

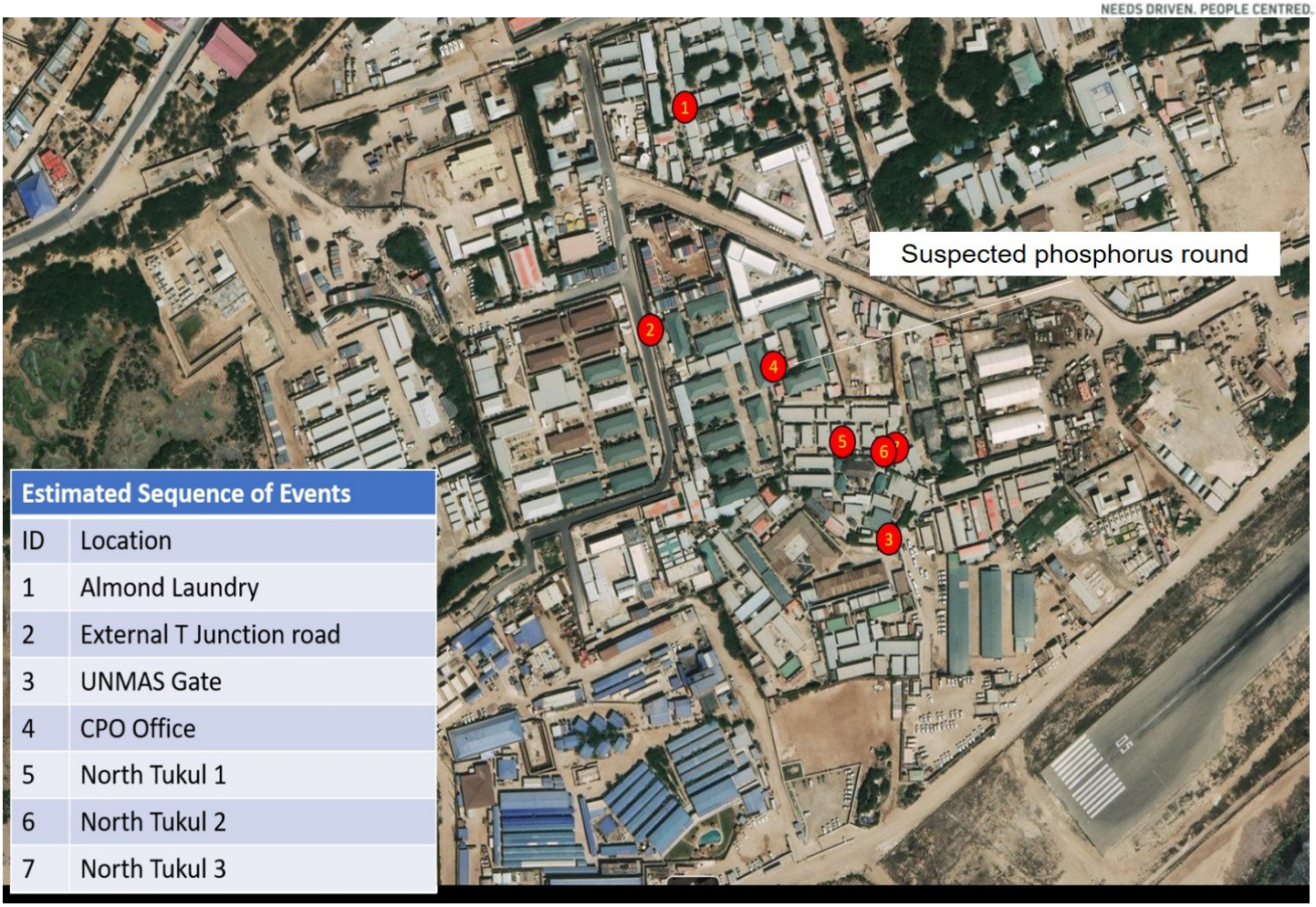
Incident Summary

The below graphic illustrates the currently assessed chain of events. Seven mortar rounds are confirmed as having been fired. The first round is assessed as having landed near the Close Protection Officer (CPO) office, followed by one round along the road leading to the T-Junction.

The third impact was heard south, likely near UNMAS gate.

The four last impacts occurred in rapid sequence in close proximity to Tukul.

This sequence of events is based upon ground interviews and is subject to change.



Estimated Sequence of Events	
ID	Location
1	Almond Laundry
2	External T Junction road
3	UNMAS Gate
4	CPO Office
5	North Tukul 1
6	North Tukul 2
7	North Tukul 3

Incident Analysis

Tactics, Techniques and Procedure

The use of indirect fire weapon systems is a recurring trend of the asymmetric campaign conducted by al Shabaab in Somalia. Most of indirect fire attacks carried out by the group in Mogadishu involved in the use of light 60mm mortars. Villa Somalia, the Turkish Military Academy, Mogadishu Stadium and Mogadishu International Airport were however targeted by 81 and 82mm mortars.

Al Shabaab have used 81mm mortars to target the United Nations compound of Mogadishu International Airport on one occasion in 2018: at approximately 10:30EAT on 01 July 2018, five 81mm mortar rounds were fired from north-western Kaxda neighbourhood. The rounds landed short of the United Nations compound along Jazeera road. Five civilian fatalities and an unconfirmed number of injuries were reported.

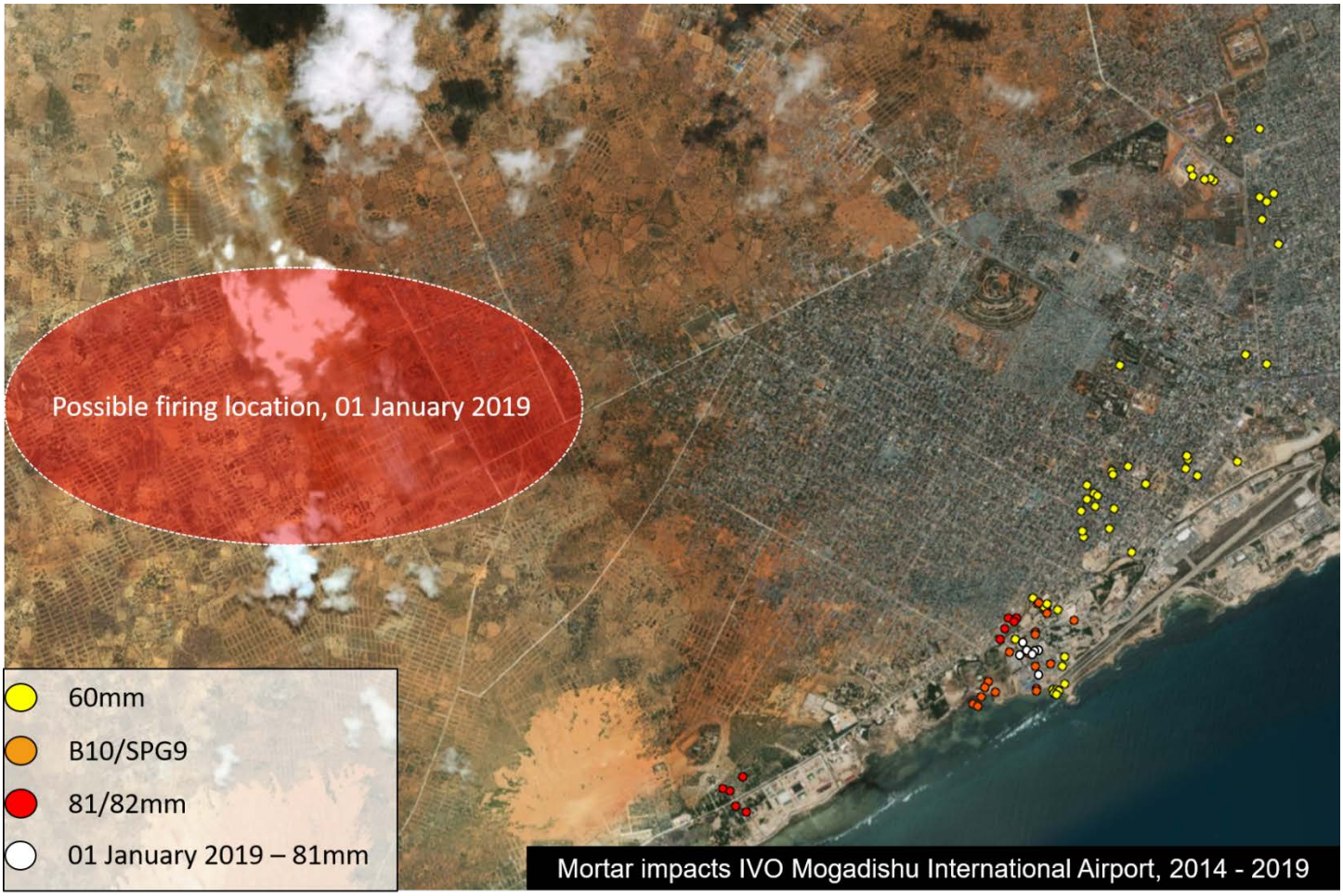
The shelling of the United Nations compound of Mogadishu International Airport on 01 January 2019 was notably more accurate than previous occurrences.

It is plausible the mortar team deployed on 01 January benefited from more training and was overall more competent than the previous teams:

- The first two detonations occurred at the northernmost and southernmost points of impact. It is currently assessed this demonstrated the team's attempt to establish its bearing by bracketing the targeted area.
- The remaining rounds landed in close succession and in close proximity to each other inside the United Nations compound, demonstrating the proficiency of the mortar team with their weapon system.

While the level of proficiency of the mortar team deployed on 01 January 2019 is comparably higher than previously observed, there is at the time of writing no evidence to suggest the team targeted any specific building/facility within the United Nations compound.

The existence of several high structures within the compound may have provided aiming markers to the team. This is suggested by the location of the impacts post-bracketing, all located in close proximity of each other. The use of a nearby elevated structure as aiming marker is currently assessed likely.



Weapon System

Evidence recovered from the scene included tail fins displaying markings. All markings observed on the ignition cartridges match those recovered on the three tail fins recovered in the aftermath of the 01 July 2018 attack.

- The L33A1 ATC 75 is an ignition cartridge used in 81mm mortars by various militaries. The L33A1 is produced for the UK Military's use with L16 81mm mortars, however is compatible with US M29 and M29A1 mortars.
- 81mm mortars have a maximum effective range of 5,500m. This is in line with the currently assessed firing point located in Dharkenley's Kaxda neighbourhood, approximately 4.5km away from the average impact point.
- The serial number of one of the tail fins, inserted below the ignition cartridge, match the serial number recorded on one of the tail fins recovered following the 01 July 2018 attack. It is highly likely the two rounds came from the same batch of ammunition.

Picture ID	Date/Location	Ignition Cartridge	Serial Number
1a	01 July 2018, Jazeera road, IVO MIA	L33A1 ATC 75 AD	918 GD 1275
1b	01 July 2018, Jazeera road, IVO MIA	NIL	NIL
2a	01 January 2019, UN Compound, MIA	L33A1 ATC 75 AD	918 GD 1275
2b	01 January 2019, UN Compound, MIA	NIL	NIL
3a	01 January 2019, UN Compound, MIA	L33A1 ATC 75 AD	957 GD 1 176
3b	01 January 2019, UN Compound, MIA	This round is suspected to have included phosphorus.	

Annex: Incident Imagery

SITE 2 Damages (T JUNCTION ROAD)

SITE 3 Damages (UNMAS GATE/CAR PARK)

SITE 4 Damages (CPO Office)

SITE 5 Damages (NORTH TUKUL)

SITE 7 Damages (NORTH TUKUL)