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Museveni on Al Shabaab Attack: Our Soldiers in Somalia Panicked

Kim Aine • May 28, 2023 2 minutes read



President Museveni has broken his silence about the deadly Al-Shabab attack on the UPDF base in Somalia, saying the soldiers panicked.

"Some of the soldiers there did not perform as expected and panicked, which disorganized them, and the Al-Shabaab took advantage of that to overrun the base and destroy some of the equipment," said Museveni on Saturday night.

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An unknown number of UPDF soldiers were killed when the Al Shabaaday carried out a pre-dawn attack on the Ugandan military's Forward Operating Base in Buulo-Mareer, Lower Shabelle, South Western Somalia.

The base, which Museveni said was manned by a company of UPDF soldiers, is located about 120 kilometers from the war-torn country's capital, Mogadishu.

"The panic, it seems, was totally unnecessary because, in fact, both the anti-tank ditch and our soldiers had destroyed the three vehicles of explosives outside the FOB," said Museveni.

The president's statement comes amid increased public concern about the number of Ugandan soldiers killed in the attack.

The Defence Ministry and ATMIS (African Union Transition Mission in Somalia) have since refused to disclose more details about the death toll.

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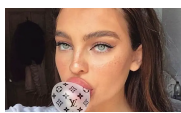
Al Shabaab, which is known to exaggerate its figures, claimed killing 137 Ugandan soldiers and seizing vehicles and the base's cache of weapons and ammunition.

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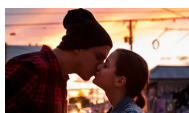
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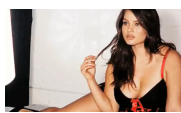
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Nevertheless, Museveni provided more details about the circumstances under which UPDF soldiers lost the fight to the Al Shabaab, saying some of the troops moved to a distant FOB.

He also seemed to point out the use of light weapons at the FOBs despite the military base's strong defences.

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"There were two tanks, two 14.5mm anti-aircraft guns, and a 107mm Katyusha rocket launcher," said Museveni.

Museveni also disclosed that the FOB had aerial surveillance covered by unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).

This means the UPDF commanders had an opportunity to watch the Al Shabaab descend on the FOB in real time.

"Moreover, our UAVs (drones) were watching the whole scenario from up in the sky and directing fire," said Museveni, possibly wondering what could have gone wrong.

The commander-in-chief also pointed out that "many of the soldiers withdrew to the next FOB, nine kilometers away," adding, "The terrorists were many, about 800 or so according to the UAVs."

This implies that, under panic, some soldiers decided to fight back while others fled.

To Museveni, since the drones were monitoring the advance of the attackers, "it was a missed opportunity to annihilate them."

Inquiry

He said the Chief of Defence  son Mbadi, has set up a

Board of Inquiry (BOI), and the full facts will come out, including the details of the casualties.

Museveni also seemed to suggest that the soldiers at the overrun base were not well trained and prepared for combat action in Somalia.

"It is criminal for anybody involved, to send into such a theater soldiers who are either not suited for that mission or not properly prepared for it," said Museveni, adding, "Details will come out after the BOI has finished its work."

He emphasised: "This unfortunate incident should be used to remind all those concerned, that operations in Somalia and other theaters are combat missions and not welfare missions where you can access UN allowances."

Museveni also gave an insight into how the Al Shabaab gained entry into the UPDF base after a fight that saw Ugandan forces blow up the attackers' three trucks.

"The suicide bombers, or whatever, were forced to blow themselves up before they gained entry into the base," said Museveni.

"The operations are continuing, and they will regret their actions."

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intense military operations against the Al Shabaab on Saturday, killing hundreds.

President Museveni did not speak about some of the soldiers captured by al-Shabab as prisoners of war.

In 2015, Al-Shabaab attacked a UPDF base in Janale, Lower Shabelle, killing 15 soldiers.

President Museveni has since dispatched Land Forces commander, Lt. Gen. Kayanja Muhanga to Somalia to "ascertain the circumstances under which the attack happened and devise the way forward."

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