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PRESS RELEASE

(for immediate release)

Somali, AMISOM forces on the outskirts of Kismayo

Dhobley-September 30th, 2012; Troops from the Somali National Army and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) have advanced to within 5km of the port city of Kismayo, a day after they pushed Al-Qaeda-affiliated militants from the southern Somali town of Canjeel.

Two days ago, an advance AMISOM force conducted an amphibious landing on the beaches north of Kismayo and has so far secured the northern parts of the city, including the road leading to the capital Mogadishu, the Kismayo University, and the old airport.

The main force is approaching the city from the North West. Over the last one month, the joint forces have secured a string of towns and centres on the road between Afmadow and Kismayo including Miido, Bibi and Jana Cabdalla.

“The capture of Canjeel has opened the way for more of our forces to advance towards Kismayo in support of our operations there,” said AMISOM Force Commander, Lieutenant General Andrew Gutti. “Our aim is to degrade the ability of the Al-Shabaab who threaten and oppress the people of Somalia, disrupting the country’s peace process,” he added.

“As we move into the southern parts of Kismayo, we are taking every precaution necessary to minimize the impact of our operations on the civilian populace. We have established No-Fire Zones around markets, schools, mosques and hospitals,” he said, calling on any Al-Shabaab fighters remaining in the city to lay down their arms

The AMISOM Force Commander congratulated the Somali and AMISOM forces for a job well done. “From our current location our intent is to conduct systematic pacification operations until Kismayo is secure and the people are able to conduct their business without interference,” he said.

He also urged the international community and humanitarian agencies to expedite the provision of much needed humanitarian assistance to the population in the liberated areas. “We stand ready to facilitate any such efforts to relieve the suffering of the Somali people,” he said.

As AMISOM forces continue to secure more ground, this has given an added impetus to the Somali peace process. Today, the country has a legitimate provisional constitution as well as a broadly representative parliament. It has also held an open and competitive presidential election leading to a peaceful transfer of power, the first time that has happened in Somalia in over four decades.

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