The Al Shabaab Attack

Why in News?

A military base in Kenya, used by US and Kenyan forces, came under attack from the Somalia-based Al Shabaab militant group recently.

What happened?

- US aircraft and vehicles were destroyed in the assault and four attackers were killed.
- There have been confrontations between the US and Al Shabaab in the past.
- But this is the first time the latter has struck US forces inside Kenya, considered to be a key base for fighting the highly resilient militant group.

What is the Al Shabaab group?

- The Al Shabaab group is Islamist group which is active in East Africa and is involved in the ongoing civil war in Somalia.
- The term Shabaab means "youth" in Arabic.
- In 2012, it pledged allegiance to the militant Islamist organization Al-Qaeda.
- The group has been fighting to overthrow the weak West-backed Somali government which is being supported by a 21,000-strong African Union peacekeeping force.

What are the previous attacks in Kenya and Somalia, and the US response?

- **2011** - Kenya invaded southern Somalia following kidnappings that Al Shabaab claimed, and the former's troops were integrated into the peacekeeping force a year later.
- **2013** - The militant group struck the Kenyan capital Nairobi in a multi-day attack that left 67 dead.
- A year later, a US airstrike killed Al Shabaab leader Ahmed Abdi Godane.
- **2015** - The group killed 148 people at Garissa University College in central Kenya in a 15-hour siege.
- **2017** - A truck bombings believed to be carried out by Al Shabaab killed over 500 in Somalia.
- A US airstrike killed more than a hundred militants affiliated with the group in the country.

- **January 2019** - Al Shabaab launched a suicide attack on an upscale hotel and office complex in Nairobi, killing 21 people.
- **September 2019 -** The group carried out a raid in a base in Somalia, which is used by both Somali Special Forces and American troops.
- The base was not breached, and all attackers were killed.
- **December 2019** - A truck bomb in Somalia's capital killed at least 79 people and US airstrikes killed seven al-Shabab fighters in response.

What was the Sunday attack?

- The US established Camp Simba in Kenya's Lamu county more than a decade ago, where it maintains under a 100 personnel.
- In 2019, it became a permanent military installation after a US flag-raising at the camp signified its change from tactical to enduring operations.
- The Kenyan Defense Forces (KDF) said there had been an attempt to breach security at the Manda Bay airstrip, which is near the Camp Simba US base, but the attack had been successfully repulsed.
- The US trains and gives counterterror support to its East African partners at the Manda Bay airfield.
- Al Shabaab in a statement claimed responsibility and said that it had destroyed seven aircraft and three military vehicles in the attack.



Source: Indian Express

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