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Somalia's onslaught on militant group Al-Shabaab gained new ground after forces seized Runirgoud town, the last bastion of the extremists in Middle Shabelle, about 240 kilometres north east of the capital Mogadishu.

According to Gen Abdullahi Ali Anod, the spokesman of Somalia's Ministry of Defence, a contingent of the Somali National Army supported by local vigilantes captured Runirgoud from Al-Shabaab on Friday.

Addressing the media, Gen Anod said that the pro-government forces first infiltrated into villages next to Runirgoud town and engaged Al-Shabaab militants in fierce fighting on Thursday.

"Finally, the SNA troops, together with local pro-government militia, seized the town in the early hours of Friday," Anod said.

A fortnight ago, Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud assured that the operations to liberate Middle Shabelle, one of the two regions that formed Hirshabelle State in Central Somalia, was about to be completed.

"Only Runirgoud is remaining to be liberated in Middle Shabelle (region)," said President Mohamud.

Fierce fighters

Local militias that are part of the ongoing efforts to liberate territories controlled by Al-Shabaab are often referred as Mo'awisley and belong to largely pastoralist communities, often producing fierce fighters that easily push the jihadists from positions.

Small areas of Hiran, the second region of Hirshabelle State, remain under the control of the Al-Qaeda-linked group while Somali government forces and local vigilantes seem determined to liberate the territories.

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