

ACSRT/Incident-Analysis-009-2015

Algiers, 6 April 2015

Incident Analysis

Terrorist Attack, Garissa University, Kenya

2 April 2015

I. The Incident

Kenya: Garissa University massacre



Alleged mastermind
Mohamed Mohamud
Kenyan. Former teacher turned Shebab fighter



Shebab
Somali Islamist group. Affiliated to Al-Qaeda
Aims:
Overthrow Somali government
Oust Kenyan troops from Somalia

Kenya's worst Islamist attacks

- 1998**
US embassy, Nairobi
Al-Qaeda
213 dead
- 2013**
Westgate shopping mall, Nairobi
Shebab
67 dead
- April 2, 2015**
University College, Garissa
Shebab
At least 147 dead

- ▶ Masked gunmen storm the university at dawn
- ▶ They roam the campus, shooting on sight
- ▶ Non-Muslim students taken hostage inside a dormitory
- ▶ Troops storm dormitory as night falls. Gunmen trigger suicide vests



1 km

University

Garissa

ETHIOPIA

KENYA

NAIROBI

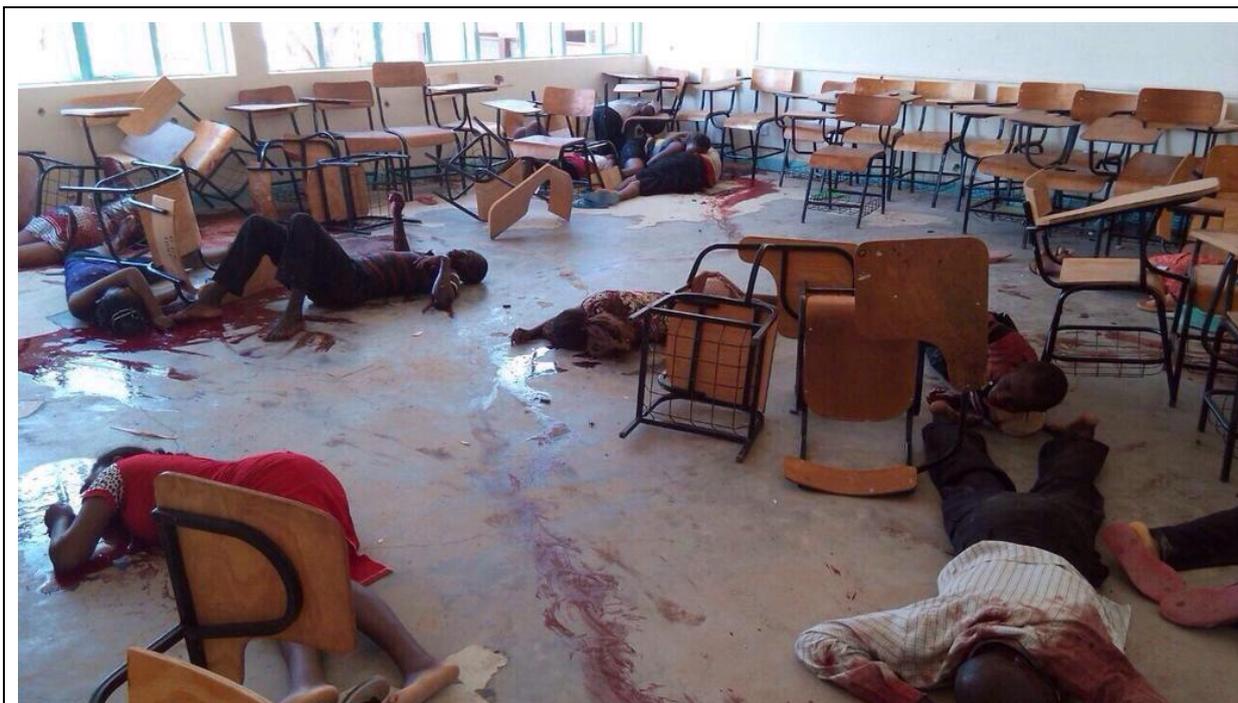
SOMALIA

INDIAN OCEAN

AFP

At around 05:30 AM on 2 April 2015, between six to ten masked gunmen stormed the campus of Garissa University College, killing two security guards at the main gate.

The terrorists then moved about the campus, hurling grenades and shooting any person on sight. Subsequently, the terrorists entered the dormitories where they separated Muslim from non-Muslim students by asking the students to recite verses from the Quran. The terrorists proceeded to release the Muslim students and started executing the other students.



Scene in one of the dormitories where Al Shabaab killed 142 students. Source www.wordpress.com

Kenyan security forces and police speedily responded to the threat and laid siege on the university campus, engaging in ferocious gun battles with the terrorists holed up in some of the dormitories where some students were still trapped. After a 15-hour siege and gun battle, the four terrorists, who all wore suicide vests, blew themselves up when Kenyan security forces stormed the dormitory in which they were hiding.

The attack left 142 students, 3 police officers, and 3 soldiers dead, while 78 civilians were injured.

Recent information at hand has identified *Mohamed Mohamud*, an Al Shabaab commander as being the mastermind behind the Garissa University attack. Known also by the alias '*Kuno*', as well as '*Dulyadin*' and '*Gamadhere*' - meaning "long armed" and "ambidextrous" - the alleged Al Shabaab terrorist is also wanted in connection with a string of recent cross-border killings and massacres in Kenya's northeastern border region. *Mohamud* is a Kenyan national and an ethnic Somali. *Mohamud* was reportedly born in Ethiopia into the powerful Somali Ogaden clan, which controls the region where Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia meet. He was a teacher and then headmaster of a madrassa in Garissa, but later became radicalized and crossed the porous border into southern Somalia to join the Islamic Courts

MOST WANTED
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For Garissa University Attack, 2nd April 2015
Mohamed Mohamud | Alias (aka) Dulyadin | Alias (aka) Gamadhere

Call or SMS immediately
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APS HQ HOTLINE: 0702432877

Kaa Chonjo!
USINYAMAZE



Union, a precursor to Al Shabaab. *Mohamud* was a well-known hardline commander. He commanded a much feared Islamist unit in Mogadishu called the "Jugta-Culus" - or "heavy strikers", who engaged in some of the fiercest fightings. He appeared in several propaganda films showing Al Shabaab battles in southern Somalia, and was later commander in the southern Somali Ras Kamboni militia, under the warlord *Ahmed Madobe*, a former Islamist commander turned Kenyan ally. Kenyan police had offered a 20 million shilling (\$215,000, €200,000) bounty for information leading to his capture.

II. Analysis

This is the bloodiest attack by Al Shabaab in Kenya since the 1998 Al Qaida US embassy bombing in Nairobi, which left 213 people dead and over 90 others with serious injuries. Kenya has, in the recent past, suffered several brutal attacks by Al Shabaab including the Westgate shopping mall attack in September 2013 in which 67 people were killed.

Other attacks since September 2013 include:

- The 15 June 2014 attack on hotels and bars in Mpeketoni, including the local police Station, east coast of Kenya. In total the attacks have left 65 people dead, 10 vehicles burnt, and 64 houses burnt (17 residential houses and 47 commercial buildings).
- 16 June 2014 attack on Porokomo village, east coast of Kenya, where 10 civilians were killed;
- The 6 July 2014 attacks on Hindi and Gamba villages, east coast of Kenya which left 29 civilians dead;
- On 24 July 2014, 11 civilians were killed by Al Shabaab, in northern Kenya;
- On 22 November 2015, Al Shabaab attacked a bus in Mandera, northern Kenya, killing 28 civilians.
- On 25 November 2014, 36 civilians were killed when Al Shabaab attacked a quarry at Kormey, north-eastern Kenya.

The area of Garissa, scene of the most recent attack, and the area of Mandera, in northern Kenya, are situated just 150 kilometers from the Somali border, and have long been prone to fast hit-and-run attacks by Al Shabaab terrorists who take advantage of the long porous border between Kenya and Somalia to stage attacks on civilian targets inside Kenya.

Northern Kenya is very difficult to secure due to the vast geographical terrain, long border, isolated villages and the ability of Al Shabaab terrorists to easily infiltrate the area.

The attack on Garissa University is an indication that Al Shabaab is following through with its threats of stepping up terrorist violence in Kenya. It is also an additional confirmation that Al Shabaab is morphing their local terror war in Somalia into a regional conflict by expanding terror operations to Kenya and beyond.

The attack on Garissa University once again illustrates the tactics used by Al Shabaab to hit soft targets such as open public places where a large number of civilians congregate and where the attacks can instill maximum terror, extreme fear, horror, panic and chaos, cause the greatest number of casualties and provoke a high sense of insecurity, uncertainty and doubt about national security forces' ability to stop the carnage. This tactics give the group the much-needed media attention, scare away visitors and devastate Kenya's tourism industry.

The systematic selective killing of Christians and the setting free of Muslims in the group's attacks, sow seeds of discord, division, and mutual suspicion among Kenian compatriots; It has the potential to heighten intercommunity animosity and tension and spark an all out ethno-religious violent confrontation between the 80% majority christian Kenian Population and their 10% muslim compatriots.

As it seeks to expand its destabilization activities in East Africa and beyond, Al Shabaab needs as many recruits as it can get. There can be no better approach towining over the east african muslim constituency, an important social base and huge potential source of recruitment, than portarying Al Shabaab's terrorist activities as acts of legitimate self defence carried out on East African Muslims' behalf against "opressive unbelievers" and their governments in the region. It is an appealing ideological narrative for inatentive muslim believers, and an infectious and effective lie and propaganda tool.

We should not loose sight of the fact that Al-Shabaab is an Al-Qaida affiliate. It pledged allegiance to al-Qaida central. For a number of years now, it has been promoting and implementing al-Qaida's violent extremism and terrorism methods and objectives in East Africa while also pursuing its own national agenda.

The Garissa attack bears the hallmark of Alqaida's profound influence over Al Shabb's strategy and tactics. The Alqaida leader Ayman Al Zawahiri's message of 13 September 2013 just a few weeks before the West Gate Mall attack outlining the criteria of eligibility of a target for terrorist atack is a point in case.

As a result of successful counter-terrorism military initiatives by AMISOM and the SNA during 2014 Operations "Eagle" and "Indian Ocean", Al Shabaab has found itself on the defensive in Somalia, and unable to fight a conventional war. Consequently, Al

Shabaab, using resilience and adaptability, has, ever since, turned more towards asymmetric/urban warfare aimed at soft and vulnerable targets such as civilians, through the use of Amniyat units. Kenya, in particular, has borne the brunt of this form of attack. While other AMISOM troop contributing countries have also been attacked by Al Shabaab, none of them has been attacked as often as Kenya.

III. Conclusion

The Garissa University attack clearly indicates that, although Al Shabaab has been significantly weakened militarily, the group, through its highly-mobile, battle-hardened, highly-radicalized, well-entrenched Amniyat units, is still capable of causing damage to vulnerable targets such as critical infrastructure and sensitive sites and inflicting large-scale casualties on civilian population. Thus, more attacks of the type seen at Garissa can be expected

There are no easy solutions to a guerrilla type asymmetrical warfare. The solution must continue to be that of a multipronged and multi-stakeholder approach which the government of Kenya is clearly already pursuing: What is required is continued preparedness, resilience, and unflinching steadfastness. The visible effort that is being made to strengthen international and regional cooperation and coordination is to be commended. The work being done to enhance the capacity of defence forces, Intelligence, security services and law enforcement agencies to conduct robust and successful operations, to monitor, investigate, intercept and disrupt terrorists' planning, networks and activities, cut off terrorists' funding and access to equipment and training and bring terrorist leaders and their supporters to justice, is the right thing to do. This work must continue to be complemented by heavy investment in prevention and in the building of a strong partnership between the state and different national stakeholders, including the communities living in war thorn border areas, so as to win the commitment and genuine support of the population to the government's counter terrorism efforts. This win/win partnership will help identify and uproot sleeper cells, infiltrators and collaborators, reduce and eventually stem the flow of new recruits that join terrorist groups and perpetrate terrorist attacks.