



SPECIAL ADVISORY

INCREASING THREAT TO FAITH-BASED WORKERS IN SOMALIA AND THE SPHERE OF INTEREST OF AL-SHABAAB

10 March 2016

SUMMARY

In light of recent US military action against al-Shabaab targets in Somalia, CCI assesses the risk of retaliatory actions against faith-based organizations (FBOs) to be increasing and to pose a substantial threat.

We evaluate this threat as being inclusive of all faith-based organizations, especially those considered to be “American”, “European” or in any way identifiable as Christian. We stress to our colleagues from European agencies that we believe downplaying this threat because your organization is not American is not supportable.

We recommend that FBOs with personnel in Somalia (anywhere in the traditional country, not just one of the partitioned semi-states) give careful attention to the viability of continued operations in the country. We recommend that FBOs with personnel in countries within the sphere of influence of al-Shabaab give careful attention to reducing your profile and increasing the security posture, awareness and capacity of your operations in those countries.

ASSESSMENT

Western military forces have conducted at least six public unilateral operations against al-Shabaab in Somalia beginning in January of 2013¹. By far the most significant of

¹ 11 Jan 2013: French forces attempt a rescue of 3 hostages; 5 October 2013: US forces withdraw during an assault on a house in Barawe; 26 January 2014: Senior al-Shabaab commander killed in drone missile attack; 6 September 2014: al-Shabaab leader killed in drone strike; 29 December 2014: US jets conduct an airstrike targeting al Shabaab commander; 12 March 2015: US drone strike against al-Shabaab commanders.

these occurred on 6 March 2016 when a combination of unmanned drones and manned fighter aircraft attacked an al-Shabaab training camp approximately 100 miles north of Mogadishu. Media reports put the death toll in the attack at 150, all of whom were apparently about to graduate from an al-Shabaab training program at this location. Consistent media reports indicate that US and/or western forces had intelligence that a large-scale attack against NGOs and/or other soft targets was to shortly follow this graduation ceremony.

The following factors inform the forecast of the range of responses by al-Shabaab to this event:

1. In order to maintain relevancy in the cauldron of terrorist groups and the increasing pressures brought by host governments; al-Shabaab must demonstrate a continuing capacity to mount terrorist attacks both inside and outside of Somalia.
2. Al-Shabaab operates with what might in other circumstances be called an inferiority complex. Perhaps because its primary area of operation denies availability of many western targets, this group has suffered from what it perceives as a lack of media attention. This, in part, explains the group's selection of higher profile targets (such as the Westgate Mall in Nairobi).
3. The "ideal" target of a successful attack (from al-Shabaab's perspective) would be a US military target; however, this is a very "hard" target and absent incredible luck is beyond this group's capacity. Consequently they will look for a softer but still symbolic target. Any western target will be sufficient to meet the symbolic needs that al-Shabaab will perceive to be required.
4. FBOs, NGOs and other international groups of any kind are predictable targets for al-Shabaab retaliatory attacks. If all other factors were equal (e.g., likelihood of success, probability of escape, number of potential casualties, etc.), a Christian faith-based organization would be the most attractive target to al-Shabaab. This is due, of course, to the antagonism that an Islamist radical terrorist group feels towards an evangelical Christian group it sees as proselytizing on the Islamist group's home soil.
5. In addition to numbers of attacks inside the essentially failed state of Somalia, al-Shabaab has demonstrated the ability to mount successful attacks in:
 - a. Kenya (with the Westgate Mall attack, resulting in some 67 deaths, and the Garissa University College attack with 147 deaths being the most lethal but certainly not the only attacks in Kenya)
 - b. Uganda (simultaneous bombings of soft tourist targets in Kampala)
 - c. Yemen (in partnership with AQAP terrorists there)
 - d. Djibouti (an attack on a restaurant popular with tourists)
 - e. Commercial aviation, with a 16 February 2016 suicide bomber successfully getting an IED inside a laptop onto a Daallo Airlines flight that departed Mogadishu on its way to Djibouti
6. CCI assess the most likely location of al-Shabaab retaliatory attacks to be within Somalia if any western, symbolic targets remain accessible in the country. Attacks in Kenya are the second most likely location.
7. CCI urges European and other non-American FBOs and NGOs working in Somalia to carefully assess their risk and not to give inappropriate weight to the protective

value of not being an official “American” organization. We don’t think al-Shabaab cares that much...

Al-Shabaab has demonstrated proficiency in a broad range of attack methodologies, including:

- Bombings using military ordnance
- Bombings using IEDs
- Post-bombing attacks on first responders
- Landmines
- Assassinations
- Facility assaults
- Mortars attacks
- Complex attacks (combined bombing/facility assault with firearms)

Targets have included:

- Bars and restaurants
- Bus terminals
- Churches
- Mosques
- Military convoys
- Western and national hotels
- Busses and mini-busses
- Police officers
- Military personnel
- NGO compounds
- Shopping malls
- Commercial aviation

OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

FBOs operating within Somalia are encouraged to carefully review their security situation with special attention to the threat posed by al-Shabaab. In doing so, careful attention should be given to al-Shabaab’s need to generate media attention by attacking high-profile but “soft” targets (FBOs and their staff, especially western staff, most definitely meet these criteria). FBOs that are unable to adjust their security posture to provide realistic deterrence or protection from this threat should consider a temporary withdrawal or shelter-in-place.

CCI provides a number of options for consideration for agencies faced with the need to increase security in light of a changing threat. We realize that in some cases many of the options listed will already be in place. We also realize that in other cases specific options may be inappropriate or not possible. Because we are not present at your

facility or area of operation and thus able to eliminate options that are already in place or clearly won't work, we offer a much larger list of options for your consideration:

Options for Increasing Awareness

1. Ensure that all staff in the affected location, area or region are informed of the situation (including expatriate and national staff).
2. Identify new or supplemental sources of information related to this situation.
3. Assign specific responsibility for monitoring all sources of information (existing, new and supplemental) to the organizational security focal point.²
4. Like-minded organizations in the affected area should establish and maintain a strong system of real-time sharing of threat information that specifically includes information on actual or suspected surveillance. Trusted INGOs³ should be included in this system.
5. Organizations should maintain regular contact with the security offices of the embassies of all of their respective citizen members, seeking the most current threat information from as many embassies as possible.
6. Organizations, their expatriate staff, and trusted national staff and employees should be carefully and thoroughly briefed on looking for and immediately reporting suspected surveillance. Reports of suspected surveillance should be made to the organization's security focal point and that information should be shared with like-minded organizations to aid in the recognition of patterns and trends.
7. Document and track all reports of suspicious events, circumstances and persons; suspected surveillance and similar items; including reports made to the security focal points of the agencies you are communicating with – look for patterns and trends.
8. Consider adding video surveillance (cameras) to potential target locations.

Options for Profile Management

9. Determine if the deteriorating conditions or increasing threat are also consistent with increasing threat or risk targeted at your organization or specific individuals (for example, nearby clan-related violence probably does not create specific increasing threat to a faith-based organization or its leaders or members; but violent response to US military action may well target any perceived US entities or persons).

² The "security focal point" is the organization's designated security officer or coordinator; or a person tasked specifically with collecting and assessing security information for the organization at or for the location in question.

³ International Non-Governmental Organizations (e.g. International Committee of the Red Cross, CARE, etc.)

10. Seek information from available sources as to whether or not the organization or any specific staff have been threatened, identified or named in any setting or forum in connection with the security situation or emerging threat.

If any such information is discovered, consideration should be given to:

- a. Rapid notification to any person named or identified in any other way.
- b. Rapid notification to the organization's security focal point.
- c. Rapid notification to the organization's leadership.
- d. Share this information with other (trusted) organizational security focal points to identify patterns or trends.

If any such information names or identifies specific persons, consideration should be given to:

- a. Reducing or eliminating public appearances.
 - b. Eliminating media interviews.
 - c. Changing daily patterns of movement (how they travel, when they travel, routes they take, etc.).
 - d. Temporarily changing work and/or residence locations (e.g., don't go to the office, check into a hotel, etc.).
 - e. Assigning a security detail to such person(s).
 - f. Temporary relocation or strategic withdrawal of such person(s).
11. If any such information names or identifies a facility or venue, consideration should be given to removing signs, advertising and other branding of the location that is not directly necessary to accomplish the objectives of the organization.

Options for Enhancing Site and Facility Security

12. Reinforce any weaknesses in fences and walls, consider adding supplemental barriers (e.g., concertina wire) on top of existing fences and walls.
13. Ensure that vegetation is appropriately trimmed and/or removed so that there is open space between the perimeter and the site or facility (no easy concealment for an intruder).
14. Ensure that existing lighting is operational, is properly directed (from the facility pointed towards the perimeter, not the reverse) and is in working order.
15. Verify that all door and window locks are adequate and operational. Consider adding supplemental locks if appropriate.
16. In any environment where the use of IED's, VBIEDs or UXO⁴ is possible, protect open space between any place a vehicle can be and the building, facility or place where potential victims may gather. Options for consideration include:

⁴ Improvised Explosives, Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Devices, Unexploded Ordinance.

- a. The development of secure perimeter barriers (highway K-rails are the fastest device usually available in most countries).
 - b. Access control for vehicles entering the perimeter must be strict, strictly enforced, and effective. CCI recommends a “known trusted vehicle” program and that it be used together with inspections and behavior analysis by trained personnel.
 - c. Facility characteristics should be upgraded to protect against explosions. This primarily involves strengthening and/or shielding glass (a number of commercial products to protect windows in a bombing environment are available). Seating and assembly locations should be as far from potential vehicle access points as possible. Emergency exits and hallways must be clearly marked, unlocked, and clear of obstructions.
 - d. Conduct careful inspections of facilities, inside and out, prior to scheduled public events. These inspections should search for unusual or suspicious items that could be bombs. After each search, visible guards should be posted around the buildings until services are over (to prevent post-inspection placement of bombs).
 - e. Brief personnel (expatriate and national) regarding the increased threat, and instruct them to be vigilant in watching for individuals who appear to be loitering around, frequently passing, or otherwise observing activities at organizational events and places. Make sure all observations are reported and reviewed (regardless of how innocuous they may seem to the observer). If a pattern is detected or suspicions are raised, report them immediately to designated security focal points and, if appropriate, to local government and to affected embassies.
 - f. If possible, limit ingress to facilities and events to just one or two locations, and have responsible individuals greet each arriving person individually. Research, especially in the context of Israeli shopping malls, shows that a tremendously effective deterrent is a personal greeting and eye-to-eye contact with each person entering.
17. Consideration should be given to creating residential safe rooms. More information on residential safe rooms is available [here](#).

Options for Personal Practices and Behaviors to Increase Security

18. Organizations should specifically and intentionally brief all expatriate staff regarding the importance of:
- a. Varying their daily routines as much as possible: Coming and going (especially from residences) at different times; traveling by different routes; etc.
 - b. Maintaining constant awareness of the environment around them, paying special attention to persons and vehicles that don't belong (in neighborhoods staff are familiar with), to persons or vehicles that appear to be following them, or to any other conditions that do not appear “normal”.
 - c. Trusting their instincts and observations and whenever they suspect or even “feel” something may be wrong, taking immediate action (such as changing routes, going into a store or other commercial structure, walking or driving directly to a police or military outpost, etc.).

19. Consider restricting travel and movements of staff (restricted hours, restricted roadways and routes, “no-go” areas and roadways).

Options for Organizational Actions and Practices to Increase Security

20. Consideration should be given to a thorough review of the organization’s emergency plans. All staff need to understand their actions and responsibilities in the event of an attack. Plans should address options for both evacuation and sheltering in place.
21. Consideration should be given to having redundant communications resources at multiple locations throughout the organization, with specific and clear directions on who to call first for assistance in the event of an attack. The call procedure and interaction with the first responding forces should be planned and rehearsed with all parties.
22. Consideration should be given to comprehensive in-service training for all staff in threat recognition, first reactions to an attack, and duties and responsibilities pursuant to the organization’s emergency plans.
23. Evacuation and shelter-in-place plans should be reviewed, updated as necessary and redistributed to all affected personnel. Evacuation and shelter-in-place plans should include (but are not limited to) the following:
 - a. Pre-determined criteria (“trigger points” or “tripwires”) for implementing evacuation or shelter-in-place plans. Criteria should be clear and unambiguous.
 - b. Clear instructions to staff on where to go, how to get there, and what to bring if an evacuation is initiated.
 - c. Pre-established “carry” checklists (“go-bag”, etc.).
 - d. Pre-determined evacuation methods, staging points, routes, rally points and destinations; all with alternates.
 - e. Shelter-in-place locations pre-determined and pre-stocked with supplies and equipment.
 - f. Communications plans with schedules, missed contact contingencies and backup equipment (ideally satellite phones).

CCI stands ready to support Christian agencies in the response to this increased threat, to conduct site-specific assessments, to provide training and to assist agencies in the implementation of these recommendations and additional actions; and to discuss specific issues and situations. We remain the only Christian agency in the world that provides real-time, on-site support and assistance in crises and emergencies regardless of the agency’s ability to pay.

Contact us:

Crisis Consulting International
PMB 223, 9452 Telephone Rd.
Ventura, CA 93004 U.S.A.
Tel (+) 805.207.2261
Email: info@cricon.org
www.cricon.org