



Practical guide to understanding and preventing suicide operations in Africa



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ISS Guide

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1 Introduction to the guide

NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

On 4 November 2011, suspected members of Nigerian group Boko Haram carried out two suicide attacks against a military base in Maiduguri and an anti-terrorism court in Damaturu, killing at least 53 people.¹ These two suicide attacks formed part of ongoing coordinated attacks by Boko Haram targeting governmental institutions and churches that by November 2011 had already resulted in the death of at least 136 victims. They have also brought the number of suicide attacks in Nigeria to five, and in 2011 made Nigeria the 11th country on the continent to experience the devastating consequences of suicide operations.

Such attacks highlight the urgency for policy makers, criminal investigators, and analysts actively engaged with this growing and serious phenomenon of suicide operations on the African continent to understand and respond to these attacks more effectively. In the light of this urgency the primary aim of this practical guide is to assist practitioners in better understanding why the tactic is used on the African continent. The guide analyses the targets, perpetrators and

impact of these attacks in order to identify possible trends that may facilitate the prevention of such attacks. Furthermore, it suggests some generically relevant policy responses and the development of standing operating procedures that may assist any state in more effectively responding to suicide operations.

CONCEPT OF ‘SUICIDE OPERATIONS’

As with the concept of ‘terrorism’, there is no consensus on the exact meaning and parameters of the term ‘suicide terrorism’. Achieving international agreement is further complicated in this context by the fact that many suicide attacks around the world are directed against military targets and are not confined to civilian ones. Considering that most definitions of terrorism refer to attacks against civilians or non-combatants, some might argue that suicide attacks are an accepted tactic in asymmetric warfare and cannot be considered as an act of terrorism.

For the purpose of the guide, the term ‘suicide operations’ is used to denote attacks or operations where the attackers involved intend to deploy themselves as a weapon – in the full expectation that they will be killed – in the execution of a deliberate attack against people and/or property to cause harm, which is normally ideologically, religiously and/or politically motivated.

OVERVIEW OF THE GUIDE

The guide is structured in the following way. Chapter 2 identifies and discusses common misperceptions and recurring features of suicide attacks on the African continent. Chapters 3 and 4 then provide a historical overview of suicide attacks in Africa between 1998 and the end of 2011. This analysis is intended to assist with better understanding the impact of suicide operations on the continent. In particular, the guide considers factors such as the circumstances leading up to such attacks, the planning behind these attacks and the functions performed by key players, and to identify any recurring patterns and themes which may assist in the future prevention of such attacks. While Chapter 3 focuses on what were categorised as more *ad hoc* attacks that occurred between 1998 and 2010, Chapter 4 examines those suicide attacks that have formed part of a broader campaign, focussing especially on the activities of al-Shabaab; those of Al-Qa’eda in the Land of

the Islamic Maghreb (AQLIM) in Algeria and its neighbouring countries; and, most recently, suicide attacks being executed by Boko Haram in Nigeria.

Finally, in Chapter 5 the guide makes a number of recommendations that are based on an assessment of the findings drawn from previous attacks and that are aimed primarily at counter-terrorism policy-makers and practitioners on how suicide attacks might be prevented or at least reduced in the future. Owing to its practical focus, this guide does not examine in any detail issues such as the conditions conducive to suicide attacks, for example those breeding frustration and marginalisation that motivate individuals to resort to suicide attacks. However, the author fully recognises that it is only when these conditions or reasons for suicide attacks are addressed as part of a holistic strategy that any lasting solution might be found to prevent these attacks.

* Al-Qa'eda in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb (AQLIM) is also known as Al-Qa'eda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). This guide uses the former.

2 Common misperceptions and features of suicide attacks

INTRODUCTION

In order to better comprehend the phenomenon of suicide attacks in Africa, it is essential to identify and address some of the related misperceptions surrounding this phenomenon. This chapter, therefore, begins by outlining two of the most common ones: that suicide operations are a foreign rather than an African problem; and that suicide operations are predominantly carried out by Islamist extremists. It then identifies and considers the most common features of suicide attacks more generally, before the context of actual suicide attacks that have occurred on the African continent is discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

COMMON MISPERCEPTIONS REGARDING SUICIDE ATTACKS

Suicide operations are a foreign rather than an African problem

Probably the most significant misperception among many Africans is that the tactic of suicide operations is a completely foreign one. In other words, when

suicide attacks are committed on the continent, it is felt that they are being committed by foreigners and/or against foreign targets, thereby leaving the targeted country almost as an innocent bystander. This explanation was especially evident following the bombings of the United States' (US) embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es-Salaam, Tanzania in 1998, which created the impression that the terrorists targeted foreign Westerners while simply using Africa as a battleground.

A primary reason why it is important to correct this misperception from the outset concerns accepting responsibility for their occurrence. Unless African states acknowledge that suicide attacks that have occurred on the continent since 1998 have not been an alien phenomenon, but rather have involved African suicide bombers and targets that had nothing to do with the West, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to develop a more constructive and effective strategy to tackle them. To put this observation another way, if the activities of Western states provided the sole motivation for suicide attacks in Africa – evidenced, for example, by solely Western interests being targeted on the continent – the onus would lie on these countries to accept responsibility for and address the underlying reasons for these attacks. As recent and ongoing incidents of suicide attacks reveal, however, they are almost exclusively executed by African nationals and directed at national and local governmental institutions.

Although terrorism in its different manifestations is not new to the African continent, suicide attacks are a relatively recent phenomenon. Nevertheless, since the first suicide attacks occurred in 1998, which were perpetrated against the two US embassies mentioned above, the nature and frequency of the phenomenon has grown and has had devastating consequences for the continent. Notably, between 1998 and the end of 2011, Africa experienced 117 suicide attacks that resulted in the death of more than one thousand people, and injuries to thousands more.

As is apparent from the map in Figure 1, suicide attacks during the period under examination here have occurred in Kenya, Tanzania, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Mauritania, Niger, Uganda, Somalia and, since 2011, Nigeria.

Figure 1 Suicide attacks in Africa 1998–2011

Suicide operations are carried out by Islamist extremists

The second misconception is that suicide attacks are largely or solely associated with Islamist extremists, in pursuit of a ‘religious cause’. At this juncture, it is important to point out that although suicide attackers or those justifying these types of attacks often seek to justify them in religious terms – such as by referring to Quranic texts in the instance of Islamist extremists – individuals may nevertheless also manipulate the interpretation of particular religious texts to serve a personal agenda. In any event, even when individuals executing attacks seem to be motivated by some form of religious ideology, at the end of the day it is important to remember that suicide operations are a tactic, the key features of which can

and should be analysed separately from any religious cover that might surround attacks.

COMMON FEATURES OF SUICIDE ATTACKS

Common features include the advantages of suicide operations, target selection, delivery methods, and the profile of suicide attackers.

Suicide operations as a ‘tactic’

Suicide attacks carry with them a number of potential tactical advantages, the principal ones of which are noted here.

Political

Politically, suicide attacks can be extremely effective in eroding public confidence in a government’s ability to protect and defend its citizens. This may subsequently allow those associated with suicide operations to exploit the climate of fear and intimidation that they have created to further their objectives.

Cost-effective

From a cost-effective perspective, suicide attacks are extremely efficient, not least in terms of their impact versus actual costs incurred for the device and any delivery vehicles, especially where the latter have been stolen prior to the attack.

Asymmetric

Tactically, the asymmetric character of such attacks means that those responsible may take optimal advantage of their own strengths while capitalising on the weaknesses of their ‘enemy’. For example, those planning the attack do not need to consider an escape plan during its planning phase. Another is that new recruits or individuals previously unknown to security forces or intelligence agencies are often used to execute attacks, making them even more difficult to detect and intercept prior to committing an attack.

Furthermore, such attacks may generally be carried out without compromising the structure or operations of the particular organisation responsible for it. Even in the event of a bomber being unable to carry out the attack and being arrested, the individual is subsequently unlikely to have sufficient knowledge of

the organisation behind it. One of the most potent asymmetric characteristics of a suicide bomber is that, in contrast to a device that is detonated remotely or through a timer, suicide bombers are best placed to detonate their device at the time and place that is likely to result in the most casualties and effect maximum damage. Considered a 'thinking bomb', the bomber is able to factor in any mitigating or unexpected factors during the execution phase of the attack.

Recruiting sergeant

Successful suicide attacks can also serve as a 'recruiting sergeant' for those organisations/groups responsible for them in terms of attracting other potential volunteers. Certainly, suicide bombers are often considered to be heroes by more vulnerable teenagers and young adults who may be frustrated by their circumstances or who are searching for meaning and belonging. Video recordings of the last will and testament of previous successful bombers are likely to serve as a powerful recruitment tool.

Strengthening a terrorist group and its agenda

Undoubtedly, successful attacks strengthen the cause and activities of any organisation or group associated with them, not least in terms of enhancing the organisation's legitimacy among its supporters, and encouraging supporters to support the 'cause' financially. Being able to execute attacks thus serves as visible evidence of the group's effectiveness. For example, the ability of al-Shabaab to execute attacks against unwelcome foreign involvement – particularly Ethiopian – in Somali domestic affairs possibly encouraged members of the Somali expatriate community to contribute financially towards al-Shabaab's cause.

Target selection

The types of targets individuals and groups decide to direct their attacks against provide invaluable insights into the objectives and message behind such attacks. For the purpose of the current analysis, the categories of potential targets are subdivided into governmental institutions and representatives, security forces, diplomatic corps, commercial institutions, and civilian ones.

Governmental institutions and representatives

Governmental, or similarly political, targets are most likely to include prominent members of the government (for example, the prime minister, president, and ministers), and key political party officials. Attacks may be directed against buildings where such individuals are located (often causing indiscriminate damage and therefore other innocent victims) or directly against an individual (discriminate attacks and assassinations will be examined later in this section). Directing attacks against governmental and political targets suggest that those responsible for the attacks may perceive the objects of these attacks as being illegitimate either in the power that they exercise or the political process that they represent.

Security forces

The category of governmental security force representatives most likely includes those individuals and structures associated with the armed forces, police and intelligence. Most terrorist groups will consider such individuals as representing the government and, therefore, 'legitimate' targets. It is, of course, also these individuals and structures that are called upon to pursue those persons and entities in any way responsible for the perpetration of attacks. As such, these governmental 'representatives' form the first line of defence against those wanting to replace or in any way change an existing political order through the use of unlawful and violent means. At the time of writing, security forces are among the principal targets in all three suicide attack 'hotspots': Somalia, Algeria and its surrounding areas, as well as Nigeria. Yet, although these attacks are directed against 'legitimate' targets, many of these attacks are indiscriminate in nature, meaning that many civilians are killed and injured as a result.

Diplomatic

References to diplomatic targets here refer primarily to diplomatic missions and personnel of foreign countries in a particular country, as well as to representatives of international and regional organisations with diplomatic status, such as the United Nations (UN), its affiliates and the African Union (AU). Groups will also target missions of specific countries or international organisations for the ideals those countries or organisations represent. This target category therefore also includes forces deployed following a diplomatic process to participate in, for example, a humanitarian or peacekeeping mission.

AQLIM, Boko Haram and al-Shabaab have targeted agencies associated with UN and foreign missions. Considering that an attack on a diplomatic mission is effectively an attack against that particular institution or country, the selection of a specific mission as a target provides valuable insights into the broader objectives of the terrorist group responsible. For example, AQLIM attacked the French embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania on 8 August 2009, and al-Shabaab attacked the Ethiopian mission in Hargeisa, Somaliland on 29 October 2008 for largely political reasons (as is explained in Chapter 4). Even the first suicide attacks carried out on the continent against the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 were directed against diplomatic targets following al-Qa'eda's declaration of war against the US in February of that year.

Commercial

For the purpose of this guide, commercial targets refer to employees and structures associated with multi-national corporations, for example the oil industry, as well as particular businesses such as banks. Deciding on target-specific commercial targets speaks to the specific country or the interests it represents.

From the incidents analysed, commercial targets have only been deliberately targeted in Algeria, where suicide attacks have been perpetrated against foreign workers and/or companies, as in the attacks of 21 September 2007 and 20 August 2008, which are considered below. Although five gendarmes were killed during the first attack, the primary intended targets were in fact the foreign workers, three of whom were killed.

Civilian

Civilian targets include ordinary people who are not individually identified and targeted, but rather are at the wrong place at the wrong time, when a suicide attacker intends more indiscriminate harm to civilian lives and property. For the purpose of this guide, the category also includes religious or sectarian targets, whether in the form of specific individuals or institutions, which in turn may indicate the intolerance of those planning and executing attacks towards those particular religions or sects.

Although suicide attacks usually result in civilian casualties, only a small minority of attacks is specifically directed against the civilian population, with civilian casualties generally being collateral damage to the primary intended target. On the less common occasions where civilians are the specific targets,

one motivation for this may be the intention to influence public opinion in order to pressurise a government into changing particular policies. One devastating example of this on the African continent was the Kampala bombings in Uganda on 11 July 2010, where the attackers intentionally targeted people watching live screenings of the FIFA World Cup final, which was taking place in South Africa. A primary objective of this attack was to persuade the Ugandan government to change its policies in relation to its military presence in Somalia as part of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

Timing of the attack

It is also important to make a few observations about the timing of particular attacks, including whether they are discriminate or indiscriminate in nature, as thought had to go into deciding when, where and how to strike.

Discriminate attacks

The attacks are often discriminate in nature in the sense that they are directed against a pre-selected, high-value target such as an important building or a very important person (VIP), for example a senior governmental official or military commander. Although such attacks may also result in a high number of casualties of other people associated with the 'target', such as bodyguards and other officials, and/or the death or wounding of civilian bystanders, from the terrorists' perspective the 'success' of any discriminate suicide operation will be judged ultimately by whether or not the selected person was eliminated.

Attacks against VIPs require extensive and careful planning, especially because such people commonly live, work, and move under close security and physical protection. The extent and nature of security correspond to their status and pre-determined security risks. Furthermore, the attacker and/or operational cell require an intelligence capability to be able to monitor or have access to the selected target's schedule in order to decide the best place and time to execute the attack. Additional information on the target – for example, regarding the detail of their security arrangements – may also influence the manner of the attack, not least to ensure that it is the most effective possible in terms of achieving its sought objectives. Generally, those members of any organisation or cell responsible for gathering information on the planned target will not be the same person(s) responsible for executing the attack. Separation between those

gathering information and those executing any subsequent attack safeguards its asymmetric nature and makes the identification and interception of any potential attacker very difficult for the security services. That said, depending upon such factors as a target's security arrangements, additional assistance may be required, for example to gain access to the intended target.

In terms of the timing of such attacks, there are two occasions when VIP targets are especially vulnerable to suicide operations: when they are travelling between destinations or when they are engaged in public engagements. In both situations it is much harder to control and secure the environment than when these individuals are static within their own residential or work premises.

With respect to the former, the planning of an attack is facilitated when the VIP travels, for example, to and from their work place, at the same time daily, using the same available routes. Owing to these and similar weaknesses in a person's protection arrangements, it is therefore unsurprising to note that most attacks of this nature have occurred when the target was in transit. Clearly, this vulnerability is not limited to the risk of suicide attacks, but rather is equally true for the use of roadside bombs or other devices, such as static vehicles packed with explosives that may be detonated remotely as the intended target passes.

Similarly, a VIP is particularly vulnerable during open public engagements, because their public personality means that at least some aspects of their schedule will be publically available, thereby providing potential attackers with invaluable planning information. As the intended victim is also static, at least for a limited period of time, they are also easier to target than, for example, trying to detonate devices against mobile targets.

Indiscriminate attacks

The primary aim of suicide attacks is normally to kill or maim people, with the physical destruction of buildings or other forms of property considered to be secondary. Therefore, the devices used in an attack often contain not only the maximum possible amount of explosives a person or vehicle can carry, but also are devised to contain or create as much shrapnel as possible in order to inflict maximum injuries and death against the intended target. Such shrapnel commonly takes the form of nails and ball bearings within the device, and flying debris created by the explosion, most frequently glass.

The inherent nature of such devices and tactics is that they are indiscriminate in nature in terms of their victims, reflecting the primary objective of some

terrorist organisations to achieve mass and indiscriminate killings: 'In many cases, terrorist groups strongly link the rate of human casualties produced by each attack to the political and psychological impact of the operation. The rule for them is that: the higher number of human casualties inflicted in the attack, the better and higher the rate of gain and the impact generated for the group and its interests.'²

In addition to utilising shrapnel to increase damage, terrorists engaged in suicide operations have developed a number of other techniques in order to maximise their impact. One of the most commonly used techniques is simultaneous attacks, whether in the form of attacks against different targets (which may or may not be close in terms of their geographical proximity) at short time intervals, or multiple attacks directed at a single target.

With respect to simultaneous attacks, these may be directed against either the same target or multiple targets, whether in the same or different geographical locations. As with multiple attacks, not all elements of simultaneous attacks need necessarily be carried out by suicide bombers. Depending on the overall objective of a particular attack, suicide bombers may form only one part of a broader offensive.

Regarding multiple attacks on the same target, sometimes referred to as 'trap attacks', targeting the same target with multiple devices is intended to create and capitalise on confusion. This type of attack requires careful planning based on the likely reactions of those present who are the objects of attack. For it to be successful, those planning this type of attack need to manipulate the behaviour of people through the setting up of 'traps', which generally involves the setting up and triggering of a combination of carefully located suicide and other explosive devices.

A different form of multiple attacks is one that occurs in the same location but that is different to trap attacks. While a number of different scenarios exist, the overall objectives remain the same, namely to increase the operation's overall success, including in terms of gaining access to the intended target. In terms of the form that such multiple attacks may take, previous attacks that have occurred on the continent point to the use of more than one vehicle or more than one suicide bomber on foot; or attacking the same target minutes apart, often with the deliberate intention of targeting first responders. Although in this type of attack suicide attackers may or may not be involved, the primary attack is in most cases executed by the secondary device. In other words, the primary

function of the first explosion in this type of attack is normally to attract the attention of the primary intended target, which is then struck by the secondary explosion(s).

The commission of multiple attacks in different areas of the same town or city, which are aimed at causing maximum confusion and capitalising on a state's inability to deal effectively with emerging threats, is a favourite tactic of al-Qa'eda operatives. These types of attacks call for a well-structured command structure aimed at directing security and emergency personnel to the location where it is intended to strike against them. Only a small number of countries are equipped and trained to respond effectively to these types of terrorist operations. Consequently, the groups concerned seek to capitalise on the apparent inability of the security and emergency services to respond to them. The message to the public is: 'How can you put your faith and security in governmental authorities that are not only ill equipped to respond to such attacks, but also to prevent their recurrence?' Similarly, the groups seek to demoralise the security forces and to raise serious questions regarding their competence to respond to these types of threats, not least among those exercising political control over a particular country or region.

Where multiple attacks occur several or many kilometres apart, a further underlying message relates to the strength and capacity of the group or organisation responsible for the attacks. Indeed, Africa's first experience with suicide bombing was the almost simultaneous attacks carried out by al-Qa'eda against the US embassies in two neighbouring countries, Kenya and Tanzania.

Delivery method

This section briefly analyses recurring trends as to how suicide attacks have been executed, namely the method of delivery. In addition, the timing of the attack may further intensify its devastating effects. For example, on 3 August 2008 at 04:45 a suicide bomber targeted a police intelligence unit in the Berber province of Tizi Ouzou, 100 km east of Algiers, killing the lone bomber and injuring 24 police officials and civilians. Although 'considerable' quantities of explosives were loaded into the Renault car, only 14 people were injured by flying glass due to the attack occurring in the early hours of the morning when fewer civilians were passing by the intelligence unit than would have been the case later in the day.³ In contrast, on 8 September 2007, a car bomb detonated near the coast guards' barracks in Delys,

Boumerdes Province, during the flag-raising ceremony when more people were present or passing by due to the time of day, killing 28.⁴

Vehicles

Vehicles, in the form of trucks or cars, are commonly used not only because of the amount of explosives they can carry, but also the degree of protection and access they can provide to those carrying out an attack. In these cases the suicide bomber, often driving at high speed, generally rams against the selected target, detonating the device on impact. The vehicle can also be detonated when it reaches its intended target close to a building or when, for example, it is parked next to a road waiting for its target to pass. These are just a few examples of how vehicles can be utilised in this context. The types of vehicles used in attacks on the continent have ranged from all sizes of passenger vehicles to larger sport utility vehicles (SUV) and even trucks.

Motorcycles

As with vehicles, motorcycles may be used to get close(r) to the intended target. Although their capacity is more limited than those of vehicles, their use still permits the bomber to carry more explosives than when on foot. Within the African context, motorcycles have been used as part of coordinated attacks in Algeria and Somalia during the period under review.

On foot

Despite the benefits of delivering explosives by vehicle or even motorcycle, in some circumstances their delivery by the suicide bomber on foot will be more effective. Although the bomber will be unable to carry large quantities of explosives, both physically and without attracting unwanted attention, the use of suicide vests can nevertheless be as deadly. In particular, a suicide bomber on foot will have better access to areas normally inaccessible to vehicles, for example a crowded location such as a market that is full of people, making this form of attack an invaluable tactic. The abilities to blend in with the local environment, and to get as close as possible to the intended target without arousing suspicion, are probably the two most important tactical benefits of this type of attack.

There are two further factors why the delivery of explosives on foot may be even more deadly than other delivery methods. The first concerns the increased ability of an attacker on foot to detonate their explosive device in close proximity

to the target, which is not always possible with other delivery methods. Clearly, the impact of such a device is most severe the closer the victim is to the explosion. The other concerns the physics behind such explosions and their effects. When explosives are detonated in a building, shock waves travel outwards, bounce off walls and then return to the origin of the explosion, leading to a cycle of shock waves. In addition to heat (causing burns) and sudden changes in pressure leading to flying debris (shrapnel), resultant sound and shock waves may pulverise organs, causing massive internal bleeding and significant injury or death. Consequently, if an explosive device is detonated in an open area relatively far from its intended victims, it will not be as devastating as when the same explosives are detonated in a crowded, closed space.

Despite its clear benefits, and the effective deployment of suicide bombers on foot as illustrated by the coordinated attacks in Algeria on 16 July and 26 August 2011, this tactic is not without its own limitations and weaknesses. For example, this tactic is often used by lone bombers operating without the planning and/or support of a larger cell or structure, which means that they may be deployed with minimum effectiveness. This is illustrated by the attacks of 14 April 2007 in Casablanca when two brothers did not detonate their suicide vests at an optimum time or place near the US consulate and the American Language Centre, resulting in the death of only the two attackers.⁵

Similarly, people using this method may have had insufficient planning or training to realise the full potential of this tactic. This was the case with Abdelfettah Raydi, who during his attack on 11 March 2007 was forced to detonate his suicide vest prematurely in an internet café in Casablanca following an argument with the owner, who prevented him from reaching his intended target. Consequently, he killed only himself and wounded three others.⁶

A final significant weakness of this tactic is that it is more vulnerable to being detected and intercepted early than, for example, the utilisation of any form of vehicle, which is also more difficult to stop when travelling at high speed. Here, it is not uncommon for the potential suicide bomber to detonate their suicide vest prematurely to avoid arrest. For example, on 5 February 2011, when Bashir Simun, a 24-year-old Tunisian national, was surrounded by security forces, he blew himself up in Mauritania's Brakna Region with no other casualties reported.⁷

In an attempt to increase the success rate of these types of attacks and to reduce the likelihood of detection, the bomber might wear a disguise in order to reduce or avoid suspicion. One strategy here can be the wearing of a military

uniform, since security officials are generally on the lookout for suspicious people in civilian clothes rather than for people in some form of uniform. This is illustrated by the attack of 20 September 2010 in Mogadishu, where the suicide bomber who attacked the Presidential Palace was dressed in a military uniform. One way in which an attacker may come into possession of a uniform is through prior employment in the relevant institution. This was the case with the 20 September 2010 attack in Mogadishu, where the bomber was later identified as a former interior ministry security guard who had defected to al-Shabaab.⁸ Clearly, such instances of former or current employees in positions of trust being recruited for terrorist activities remain a significant source of concern to governmental officials and security personnel, who must remain vigilant in the detection of potential recruits to terrorist causes.

Another method of seeking to avoid arousing suspicion and to divert attention is the utilisation of local people with no previous or known links to terrorist causes. As was explained earlier in relation to the misperception that suicide operations are a foreign rather than African problem, security officials – especially in areas not previously affected by suicide attacks – often have a pre-determined image of a suicide bomber, which more often than not includes some element of racial or ethnic profiling. Consequently, as a result of such preconceived notions, one of the most effective counter-measures on the part of those planning attacks can be to recruit individuals who will not stand out or attract attention based on commonly perceived characteristics of suicide bombers.

Number of attackers

The success and impact of any suicide operation may also be dependent on the number of suicide bombers participating in the attack. Certainly, involving more than one bomber in a single attack may enhance its likelihood of success, in terms of at least one of the devices detonating, as well as the provision of moral (and perhaps also, ideological) support to see the attack through to completion. For example, in the attack on the AMISOM base on 23 February 2009, one bomber (Ahmed Sheikhdon Sidow Wehliye) was responsible for detonating explosives inside the truck, and the other (Mursal Abdinur Mohamed Ali) detonated his suicide vest inside the camp.⁹

Practically, giving each person one task to fulfil, for example, one person driving the vehicle and the other detonating the device, those people planning

the attack further contribute to the potential success of the attack. By focusing on one task, one minimises distraction and confusion, but also hesitation.

Type of structure

It is, however, to be expected that the behaviour of people who went through a process of self-radicalisation will be different from that of a person recruited by an organisation or cell to execute a specific attack. The difference: those who after a process of self-radicalisation were directly involved in the planning of the attack, were therefore also more committed to the overall success of the operation. Without implying that suicide attackers recruited to execute a specific attack were not committed, it is natural that a person involved in only one aspect of an operation will show a different level of commitment than another directly involved in every phase of the attack.

Profile of a suicide attacker

A number of academic studies have attempted to develop a profile of a 'typical' suicide bomber based on such characteristics as gender, age, ethnicity, family status, and the economic and/or educational status of the attacker. Although interesting, it is nevertheless suggested here that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to develop any definitive profile based on such factors. Not only do terrorist organisations responsible for attacks often seek to hide the identity of an attacker, but the person's profile is often also influenced by more local factors and context, not least the specific recruitment approach and adopted criteria of particular terrorist organisations. The following list briefly identifies many of the most common characteristics making up the individual profiles of suicide attackers, which has been drawn from the facts of actual attacks that have occurred where details of the attacker have been known. It is intended to be illustrative rather than definitive for the purpose of the current analysis.

Gender

Males carried out most suicide attacks. That does not mean to say, however, that those planning attacks do not on occasion also use female suicide bombers or make use of female disguises in an attempt to arouse less suspicion so as to ensure the increased likelihood of the operation's success.

Age

There is no particular age for suicide bombers, who range from the very young to the middle aged or older. While those carrying out suicide operations are commonly in their late teens/early twenties, attackers as young as 15 and as old as 64 have been used on the continent (in both examples, in Algeria). In Somalia, the youngest attacker was identified as 16-year-old Aden Hussein, one of the attackers involved in the attack on Muna Hotel in Mogadishu on 24 August 2010.

Marital status

Attackers may be either married or single. Sometime, in another attempt to disguise suicide bombers, those planning suicide attacks may use couples.

Nationality

A common stereotype of a suicide attacker is that they are Arab-looking or of Arab descent. In recognition of such common racial or ethnic profiling, recruiters often seek to exploit these stereotypes to their advantage by targeting and recruiting people who do not fit traditional profiles. Consequently, they might focus their efforts on recruiting new converts to Islam, who may feel that they need to 'prove' their commitment to their newly found religious beliefs. Alternatively, they may focus on people of a particular nationality – specifically that of the country in which a particular operation is to be carried out – to ensure that the attacker blends in with the local people and does not arouse suspicion through being, for example, visibly different. In other words, not being from a particular country or community might impact negatively on the planned attack, not least because the intended attacker and their activities may come under closer scrutiny. Within the African context, all of the suicide attacks – with the exception of the US embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es-Salaam in 1998 – appear to have been perpetrated by individuals who originated from either the country where the attacks occurred or from the broader region. Consequently, no particular nationality can be said to be more likely than any other to carry out a suicide operation on the African continent.

Economic status

Most suicide attacks on the African continent to date have been executed by less affluent individuals. Certainly, suicide bombers implicated in attacks in Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania generally come from poorer backgrounds. It is a reality that those who have little if anything to lose are more susceptible to the idea that

they are part of something bigger than themselves. Addressing socio-economic conditions, together with other significant sources of frustration, remains essential here as part of wider efforts to de-incentivise potential suicide bombers and to make the recruiting ground less fertile than it currently is.

That said, as with any attempt to establish common attributes, there are always exceptions. One is Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, who attempted to target Northwest Airlines flight 253 to Detroit on 25 December 2009. Not only did he enjoy an elite education – including being enrolled at the University College London to study engineering and business finance – but his father, a former president of the United Bank of Africa and of the First Bank of Nigeria, was very wealthy and owned several homes, including the apartment in London where Abdulmutallab lived.

Education

There is a general tendency to think that those individuals carrying out suicide attacks around Africa are normally less educated. Analysis of those responsible for suicide attacks in, for example, Somalia, however, presents a rather different educational profile of attackers. On one side of the spectrum are those with limited or no formal education, which is unsurprising in view of Somalia's two decades of instability. Yet on the other are highly educated individuals who have been recruited from Somali expatriate communities in the US, United Kingdom and Europe more widely, who provide a very different picture. Notable examples include Shirwa Ahmed, who previously studied at the University of Minnesota, and Ahmed Hussein Ahmed, a 21-year-old student from Ealing, west London who dropped out of a business studies course at Oxford Brookes University, in the United Kingdom, in order to travel to Somalia to perpetrate a suicide attack there on 24 January 2009.¹⁰

In summary, any person, regardless of their educational opportunities, may be recruited as a suicide attacker.

CONCLUSION

The following two chapters will now analyse suicide attacks that have occurred in Africa since 1998 in the light of the framework that has been identified and developed in this chapter. In particular, the analysis will focus on the most common features of suicide attacks, which include the profile of suicide attackers; the target

selection; and delivery methods, including the advantages and disadvantages of particular methods utilised.

3 History of ad hoc suicide attacks in Africa: 1998–2010

INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers those suicide attacks that have occurred in Africa between 1998 and 2010 and that appear to be of a more ad hoc nature rather than as part of a concerted campaign. That said, the fact that they are ad hoc attacks – such as those committed against the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es-Salaam in 1998 – does not mean that they are any less devastating. Not only can a single attack create significant casualties, but the possibility of a future attack also keeps the country's government, security forces, and broader population under constant pressure.

Based on the understanding that each attack is intended to communicate a particular message to those being targeted, a broader audience as well as its own membership, the analysis here will take into account a number of potentially relevant factors. These include the profile of the suicide attacker; the nature of the selected target; the delivery method; and any relevance that might be attached to the date and/or time of an attack. Where possible and known, the identity of the attackers will also be considered in order to distinguish between national and foreign involvement, and to better comprehend any motivation behind the attack and its impact.

KENYA AND TANZANIA, AUGUST 1998

The attacks

The first suicide attacks in Africa were executed on 7 August 1998, when suicide bombers detonated two truck bombs almost simultaneously at the US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es-Salaam, Tanzania. As a result, 224 people were killed and about 5 000 injured. Not only were these terrorist attacks the first recognised and successful ones of a transnational character within the continent (there was previously an unsuccessful assassination attempt on President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa in 1995),¹¹ but they represented the first occasion on which al-Qa'eda utilised what since has become one of its hallmark terrorist tactics of suicide operations. These attacks were the first following Osama bin Laden's fatwa issued on 23 February 1998 in which al-Qa'eda through the 'World Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders'¹² declared war on the US and its allies. As a dedicated al-Qa'eda operation, the date on which the attacks were executed – 7 August – had important symbolic significance for Osama bin Laden as the (eighth) anniversary on which US forces had arrived in Saudi Arabia for Operation Desert Shield against Iraq in 1991.

Notable characteristics

There are a number of discernible trends and characteristics that apply to not only suicide operations that have occurred in Kenya and Tanzania during the period under consideration here, but are also of wider relevance to the phenomenon of suicide attacks.

Profile of the attackers

Although a number of political officials in Kenya and Tanzania claimed that their respective countries were completely innocent, and had merely been used as battlegrounds to target the US and its interests, individuals involved in the attacks were nationals of both countries. Such involvement of nationals suggests that there may have been some element of failing by both the Kenyan and Tanzanian authorities that had proven motivational for these eventual acts of suicide attacks, not least because the attacks eventually resulted in the death and injury of their

fellow citizens. Most notable here are those attackers who were included in the indictment against bin Laden issued on 6 November 1998:¹³

- Fazul Abdullah Mohammed, a Kenyan national, who travelled in and out of Kenya, most significantly to and from neighbouring Sudan since the early 1990s while bin Laden was based there. Abdullah Mohammed came to be recognised as the leader of al-Qa'eda's East Africa cell.
- Fahid Mohammed Ally Msalam, a Kenyan national, who purchased the SUV used by the Tanzanian cell together with Khalfan Khamis Mohamed (see below), and helped to load the truck with the bomb used to attack the US embassy in Tanzania. Furthermore, Msalam together with Sheikh Ahmed Salim Swedan, another Kenyan national, purchased the Kenyan truck used to bomb the Kenyan embassy. According to his uncle, Msalam became very religious after spending time in Yemen and Pakistan.
- Sheikh Ahmed Salim Swedan, a Kenyan who grew up in Mombasa, who attended a basic terrorist training camp in Afghanistan after he dropped out of school. Swedan assisted in the purchase of the Toyota and Nissan trucks used to carry out both attacks.
- Mohammed Sadeek Odeh, originally a Palestinian national, who had been granted Kenyan citizenship and settled in Witu, near Malindi, Kenya where he ran a carpentry business.¹⁴ Using the two trucks purchased by Swedan and Msalam, Odeh oversaw the construction of both devices: the Nairobi bomb was constructed out of 400 to 500 cylinders of TNT, aluminium nitrate, aluminium powder and detonating cord, and the Dar es-Salaam device consisted of TNT, attached to 15 oxygen tanks and four bags of ammonium nitrate.¹⁵
- Khalfan Khamis Mohamed and Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani were Tanzanian nationals. Mohamed assembled the bomb used against the US embassy in Dar es-Salaam; while Ghailani, a suspected explosives expert, was responsible for obtaining the bomb's components. He also rented a room at the Hilltop Hotel in Dar es-Salaam where those involved in the plot used to meet.

Any successful operation planned or motivated beyond the target country may require some local assistance. In particular, local nationals are unlikely to arouse the same levels of attention or suspicion as foreign nationals when, for example, renting an apartment or vehicle. Any closer scrutiny of the identity of a foreign national risks exposing a potential plot, the success of which will depend ultimately upon its covert nature. For example, remembering the person's nationality might interfere in keeping the planned attack secret for as long as possible.

Foreign involvement

In addition to the involvement of nationals in the planning and execution of the attacks, the terrorist cell responsible also comprised foreign nationals, most notably:¹⁶

- Wahid el-Hage (Lebanese), who served as bin Laden's personal secretary, and had moved to Kenya in 1994 to assist in the running of the Kenyan cell
- Anas al-Liby (Libyan), who conducted surveillance of potential US, British, French, and Israeli targets in Nairobi
- Mustafa Mohamed Fadhil (Egyptian), who was accused of preparing TNT and loading the TNT plus other explosives into the truck used in the attack in Tanzania

Significantly, the actual suicide bombers were neither Kenyan nor Tanzanian nationals:

- In the instance of the Nairobi bombings, the attack was carried out by two Saudi nationals: Mohamed Rashed Daoud al-Owhali, who threw stun grenades at embassy guards before running off; and the other, only referred to as 'Azzam', who was the suicide bomber.
- In the case of the Dar es-Salaam bombing, an Egyptian national, Hamden Khalif Allah Awad, was the suicide bomber.

Despite the involvement of Kenyan and Tanzanian nationals in facilitating and planning the attacks, the fact that they were ultimately carried out by foreigners may – at least to a certain degree – be reflective of the level of commitment of African nationals to what was then a new ‘cause’ of al-Qa’eda. At the time of these attacks, African nationals were not yet ready to make the ultimate sacrifice with their lives. In contrast, a possible explanation for utilising suicide bombers from Saudi Arabia and Egypt might be the fact that both countries had been subjected to Islamist extremism and the ideologies of al-Qa’eda for a longer period of time, with the consequence that more individuals were already familiar with and convinced by the concept of martyrdom, as was the case on the African continent at the time of the 1998 attacks.

Impact of attacks

Although clearly directed at the US, in both attacks it was Kenyan and Tanzanian nationals who bore the brunt of the consequences, especially the financial cost of physical damage caused and the human cost of injury and loss of life.

It is possible – particularly in the case of the Nairobi attacks where there were significant secondary casualties due to the collapse of the secretarial college, and extensive damage to the embassy and Cooperative Bank buildings – that the damage caused was more extensive than originally anticipated or intended by those planning and executing the attack. The attack in Nairobi resulted in 213 fatalities and 4 500 injuries; whereas only 11 people were killed and 85 were injured in the Dar es-Salaam attack. Of the 224 people killed, only 12 were US citizens.¹⁷ As the US was the primary intended target, one might have expected some reluctance on the part of those responsible for the attacks not to cause significant casualties to non-US citizens. One important reason for this is that all terrorist organisations, irrespective of their size, need some form of local popular support to assist them in pursuing their terrorist agendas, so care must be taken not to alienate local nationals.

Embedding of the terrorist organisation within the local context

Those planning attacks will use local vulnerabilities and circumstances to their advantage. In relation to the Nairobi attack, this is illustrated clearly by the prior activities of al-Qa’eda, which gradually extended its reach within the Horn of Africa from the early 1990s. Initially, Sudan hosted bin Laden between 1991 and 1996 (before he returned to Afghanistan), which provided him with an invaluable

opportunity to exploit the crisis and instability in Somalia (from 1991 onwards) to establish al-Qa'eda's East African cell. The latter has allowed al-Qa'eda to operate in Nairobi since at least 1993, and in Mombasa since 1994.

In order to embed itself, al-Qa'eda undertook a number of important activities:¹⁸

- It established safe houses for its members and sympathisers who were passing through. This not only facilitated illegal cross-border movement within the region, but also meant that Kenya served as a gateway for terrorist actors to the Gulf, the Middle East, and South Asia.
- It opened diverse small businesses and relief organisations to subsidise and conceal its activities. For example, in 1993, Khalid al-Fawwaz, who would later become a spokesperson for bin Laden in Great Britain, started a business in Nairobi called 'Asma Limited' that was later transferred to Abu Ubaidah al-Banshiri, one of al-Qa'eda's military commanders. Another operative, Wadih El-Hage, similarly established another business, called 'Tanzanite King', and a relief organisation, called 'Help Africa People'. In August 1994, Mohammed Saddiq Odeh, a Jordanian member of al-Qa'eda who had been trained in the camps in Afghanistan, arrived in Mombasa. During the same year Muhammad Atef, who would later be killed during the US bombing of Afghanistan in November 2001, visited Odeh in Mombasa and gave him a fibreglass boat to start a wholesale fishing business for al-Qa'eda. Under the arrangement, Odeh could take whatever money he needed to cover his expenses, and give the rest to al-Qa'eda. From business ventures to a humanitarian organisation, al-Qa'eda operatives were successful in integrating themselves with the local community without arousing undue suspicion.
- Furthermore, al-Qa'eda operatives not only lived among Kenya's Muslim population, but they also married into the local community. Being an integral part of society, foreigners were able to identify and use local people to strengthen their cover.
- Al-Qa'eda operatives in Kenya helped to train fighters, including those who attacked US troops in Somalia in 1993. It would appear that this might have occurred with the full knowledge of some US officials who failed to act, at least according to a letter US officials found, written by a member of the Kenya cell, who warned that they suspected that US officials were aware of their activities.

Vulnerability of the target country to terrorist activities

The vulnerability of both countries to terrorist activities was also an important factor, not least in terms of permitting a terrorist organisation such as al-Qa'eda to become embedded within it.

In the case of Kenya, there were a number of notable factors, which are briefly summarised here:

- The ability of al-Qa'eda members to settle in the region and evade capture: It is noteworthy that prior to the 1998 bombing, al-Qa'eda had already been established within East Africa, including Kenya, for over six years, allowing it to assimilate important local and regional knowledge, which enabled it to operate effectively and with relative ease.¹⁹
- The porous border between Kenya and Somalia: This enabled both the movement of al-Qa'eda operatives and the smuggling of weapons from Somalia into Kenya, further assisted by the fact that many al-Qa'eda associates who operated in Somalia in 1993, then later in Kenya, knew one another from Afghan training camps. Consequently, for example, according to UN investigators who were monitoring the arms embargo on Sudan, 17 mobile training centres were found in Kenya in 2005 under the control of organisers who were believed to be veterans of training camps in Afghanistan.²⁰ Furthermore, it would also appear that terrorist units established bases in Lamu and Ras Kiamboni, along the Kenyan/Somali border, in 1996. Although these units became inactive immediately after the 1998 bombings, the members of other terrorist organisations, most notably al-Ittihad al-Islamiyya and al-Takfir w'al Hijra, similarly have established sanctuaries along the Kenyan coastal strip and within the North Eastern Province.²¹
- Poor socio-economic conditions: One example is the Kenyan village of Siyu on Pate Island. Its population of approximately 1 500 people is extremely poor and without basic necessities, such as running water. Consequently, this close-knit Islamic community welcomed Fazul Abdullah Mohammed, the leader of al-Qa'eda's East African cell, as both a Muslim and generous financial provider who was able to bring some relief to their dire economic conditions. These credentials and activities enabled him, and others like him, to embed himself within local society as previously described, including through marriage to local women. Abdullah Mohammed was not the only terror suspect who lived in the area – others included:²²

- Mohammed Odeh, who married a Swahili woman from the remote Witu Village, along the Mombasa-Malindi highway.
- Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan, who married Fatma Ahmed Talo, a young woman from Lamu town.
- Abdullah Mohammed, when he arrived on the island in 2002, married the daughter of Mohammed Kubwa, Amina Mohammed Kubwa. Both houses were in the Siyu village.

As with Kenya, Tanzania had its own areas of vulnerability that may have made it more susceptible to terrorist activities. In particular, the religious divide in Tanzania is 30 per cent Christian and 35 per cent Muslim (the remaining percentage follows traditional beliefs). In contrast, 99 per cent of the population in Zanzibar is Muslim,²³ with some similarities to the divide between Nairobi (traditionally majority Christian) and the coastal regions of Kenya (traditionally Muslim). Tanzania also has related claims of marginalisation by the Muslim communities that might have provided fertile ground, a resentment recruiters could use to their advantage. Both Khalfan Khamis Mohamed and Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani originally came from Zanzibar. Although close family members of both explained to the author in interviews that they were radicalised in Dar es-Salaam after leaving Zanzibar, it is possible that both encountered the impact of diversity on the mainland, contributing to further marginalisation.

Facilitation of suicide operations within other countries

Significantly, the factors just considered above not only facilitated the perpetration of terrorist activities within Kenya and Tanzania, but also within other countries. One significant example relates to the attempted suicide bombings in London on 21 July 2005, when two of the principal suspects – Muktar Said Ibrahim (also known as Muktar Mohammed Said) from Eritrea, and Yasin Hassan Omar from Somalia – travelled to the UK on Kenyan passports.²⁴

Both would-be suicide bombers of Somali and Eritrean origin lived in Kenya, later acquiring Kenyan passports to travel to London, before claiming political asylum there. Although militants from East Africa had not previously been involved in active terrorist cells in Western Europe, the facts of this case point to the possibility that al-Qa'eda had set up difficult-to-detect bases in no-go areas in Somalia and smuggled its trained recruits in and out of Kenya.²⁵ It would appear that this approach was later replaced by members of the Somali expatriate

communities returning to Somalia to either execute acts of terrorism in their former homeland, a phenomenon that is examined in the following chapter, or alternatively to participate in training activities and receive combat experience in Somalia before returning to use their new skill sets in Western Europe, Scandinavia and the US in particular.

TUNISIA, APRIL 2002

The attack

On 11 April 2002, Nizar bin Mohammed Nawar (alias Saif al-Din al-Tunsi) drove a truck loaded with cooking gas cylinders into the El Ghriba synagogue in Djerba. The attack killed 21 people, including 14 German nationals, and injured a further 30 people who were mostly tourists. Such a target – the oldest synagogue in Africa – was most likely directed against the Jewish community in Tunisia. It is also probable that the predominantly Western tourists visiting this landmark were also specific targets. This is suggested not only by al-Qa'eda's operations in Europe, but also by the fact that the attack was planned from France and Germany, and the bomber previously had lived in Lyon, France.²⁶

Those directly implicated in the attack included:

- Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (currently being tried by military commission in the US for the planning of the terrorist attacks that occurred in the US on 11 September 2001) was implicated in the planning of the Djerba suicide bombing, although a French court considering these matters elected not try him in absentia. Although the main offence (bombing) was committed in Tunisia, Germany and France also had jurisdiction to try the case. Germany had jurisdiction due to the number of predominantly German nationals killed in the attack. Under French counter-terrorist legislation, the case could also have been heard in France on the grounds that Nizar bin Mohammed Nawar (the bomber) had lived in Lyon, the attack had been partly planned on French territory, and two French nationals were killed in the attack.
- On 5 February 2009, a Paris court sentenced Christian Ganczarski, a German convert to Islam, to 18 years in prison, and Walid Nouar, the brother of the suicide bomber, to a 12-year prison sentence for their respective roles in the suicide operation.²⁷

- Belgacem Nouar, the uncle of Nizar Nouar, was convicted in Tunisia in June 2006 for his involvement in the attack and sentenced to 20 years in prison after he was found guilty of helping his nephew build the bomb. According to available information, the device consisted of a large fuel container and detonator inside the truck.²⁸
- The suspected recruiter, Elfatih Musa Ali, also under investigation in connection with the Tunisian blast, left Germany for Sudan in May 2002 and has evaded prosecution to date.

Notable characteristics

Profile of the attackers

Significantly, this attack was carried out by Nawar, a Tunisian national, rather than by a foreign national (although he stayed in France prior to the attack). With respect to others who had participated in the attack, Ganczarski was a Polish immigrant who had immigrated to Germany as a child and had converted to Islam during the mid-1990s. Not only did he subsequently admit that he had travelled to Afghanistan and had met with al-Qa'eda members, but German police who had overheard a telephone call between Ganczarski and Nawar just before the explosive device had been detonated also identified him. The police released parts of the transcript:

Nawar: 'Don't forget to remember me in your prayers.'

Ganczarski: 'God willing. Do you need anything?'

Nawar: 'No thanks. I need your blessing.'

Ganczarski: 'God willing, O.K.'²⁹

In addition to this call to Ganczarski, Nawar also called Khalid Shaikh Mohammed just before the blast.

Motivation: ideological (religious)

Al-Jazeera later televised an audio recording in which Sulaiman Abu Ghaith, an al-Qa'eda official, claimed responsibility for the attack in revenge for the deaths of Palestinians.³⁰

KENYA, NOVEMBER 2002**The attack**

On 28 November 2002, two suicide bombers targeted the Paradise Hotel (Israeli-owned) in Mombasa, Kenya. Crashing an SUV through a guarded gate before detonating the device, the attackers killed 13 tourists, two of them children, and injured more than 80 people.³¹ In another attack, Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan and Issa Osman Issa attempted to shoot down a commercial airplane with a surface-to-air missile. In contrast to the 1998 attacks in Kenya that targeted the US, on this occasion Israel, its nationals, and its interests were the objects of attack. The same East African cell that was responsible for planning and executing the attacks in Nairobi and Dar es-Salaam in 1998 was responsible for this attack.

Notable characteristics*Profile of the attackers*

In contrast to the bombing of the US embassy in Nairobi in 1998, all of the suspects involved in both of these attacks were Kenyan nationals, with the exception of Abu Talha al-Sudani (a Sudanese national). This included the two suicide bombers, Fumo Mohamed Fumo and Haruni Bamusa. During the subsequent investigations another Kenyan national and suspect, Faizel Ali Nassor, killed himself and a Kenyan police officer when he detonated a hand grenade on 1 August 2003 rather than being arrested.³²

These bombings illustrate how extremist ideas and the previously alien concepts of suicide operations and martyrdom had become further embedded within Kenyan society. In a relatively short period of four years since 1998, Kenyan nationals were now willing to act as suicide bombers. Additionally, as will be explained below, local Kenyan nationals were key in the planning phases of the attacks.

Target selection

It would appear that the East African terrorist cell responsible for both the November 2002 and the 1998 attacks had split its operatives into at least two groups: one to conduct intelligence work, including surveillance of intended targets in order to determine any weaknesses or to buy supplies, among other things; and the other comprising expendable martyrs to carry out the attacks.

With respect to this second attack in 2002, reconnaissance of potential targets in Kenya began in December 2001, and by April 2002 a shortlist had been drawn up. It would appear that al-Qa'eda members planned the attack from neighbouring Somalia. Upon completion of preparations, those directly involved in the attack relocated to safe houses provided by local Kenyan nationals in Mombasa in August 2002. Between August and October 2002, Omar Said Omar, a local Kenyan associate, met several times with Issa Osman Issa and Fazul Abdullah Mohammad (who used the alias Abdul Karim), who were key members of the al-Qa'eda cell, at the Mombasa Polytechnic Mosque to discuss the operational preparations.³³

Delivery method

The explosive device was assembled in a farmhouse on the outskirts of Mombasa, under the supervision of Fazul Abdullah Mohammad, who also two days prior to the attack briefed the suicide bombers. On the day of the attack, one of the suicide bombers, also armed with an assault rifle and a Tokarev pistol, blew himself up at the hotel's entrance. The second suicide bomber drove a Mitsubishi Pajero (purchased by Saleh Ali Nabhan) – loaded with 200 kg of explosives, enhanced by gas canisters and containers of fuel – into a wall of the hotel, exploding instantaneously.³⁴

Motivation: religious marginalisation

Most of Kenya's Muslim believers – estimated as being between five and 15 per cent of the country's population – practice a moderate form of Islam. Certainly, prior to the 1998 US embassy attack this predominantly Christian country had no previously known history of religious extremism leading to violence. The situation would appear to be that small groups of al-Qa'eda sympathisers, who are willing to participate actively in suicide operations, now live among the Muslim community. This more recent phenomenon may be attributable, at least in part, to such factors as growing anti-American sentiment in response to 'the global war on terror',

which have been interpreted by some as a war on Islam. Certainly, extremists have often exploited images relating to the US-led military campaigns in Afghanistan and previously Iraq to reinforce such perceptions, which may ultimately be transformed into suicide operations recruits.

Reaction of Kenyan officials

When analysing the reaction of the Kenyan officials, a number of key themes emerge:

- Denial of any national root causes or responsibility for the attacks: Politically, confronted with the bombing of the US embassy in Nairobi and the subsequent acts of terrorism in Mombasa in 2002, some Kenyan government officials considered Kenya to be a victim in the form of a third party to a conflict between the US and Islamic extremists. For example, in July 2005 the then government spokesperson Alfred Mutua said: ‘We do not think there is an element of terrorism in Kenyans, it’s foreigners using Kenyans as conduits.’³⁵ At that time, only a few officials accepted that there were internal problems that needed to be addressed, such as Chris Murungaru, the then Minister for National Security, who on 29 June 2003 acknowledged that: ‘Kenya’s war against terrorism will only be won by accepting that the problem exists.’³⁶ Nevertheless, despite growing evidence of the gradual radicalisation of a number of local Muslim community members, and evidence that Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan was directly involved in the attacks in Mombasa in 2002, the dominant opinion, including that of Kenyan investigators, remained that the attacks in 1998 and 2002 were orchestrated from abroad. This is clearly illustrated by a comment made by Ambassador John Sawe, then Kenya’s ambassador to Israel, who in the aftermath of the bombing of the Paradise Hotel in Mombasa stated that: ‘There is no doubt in my mind that al-Qa’eda is behind this attack, because we have no domestic problems, no terrorism in our country, and we have no problem with our neighbours, no problem whatsoever.’³⁷
- Disproportionate response by the Kenyan security apparatus: While the political debate continued, Kenya’s security apparatus appeared to overreact in response to political pressure, as evidenced by the disproportionate numbers of potential suspects. For example, in September 2003 police officials in Mombasa arrested more than 800 potential suspects. This formed part of a wider campaign in which an estimated 1 200 people, mostly foreigners, were arrested as

part of an effort to identify terror suspects. This dragnet approach caused a public outcry, and included allegations of the violation of people's right of free movement and assembly.

- Discriminatory responses further fuelling sentiments of marginalisation: Many of the arrests appear to have been discriminatory and arbitrary in nature with many Muslims, particularly ethnic Somalis and Arabs, being targeted.³⁸ Local Muslim leaders feared that the investigation into the Paradise Hotel blast would lead to new reprisals against their community and would bolster the radical fringe even more. According to Najib Balala, the former mayor of Mombasa: 'Harassment and intimidation [by the government] have always been there for us. Now we are already branded as second-class citizens because we are Muslims and Arabs.'³⁹ Similarly, according to the director of Muslims for Human Rights, Khelef Khalifa, police harassed Muslim residents in Mombasa in response to the attacks. Instead of pursuing the key suspects, the police arrested their relatives when they failed to arrest those directly involved in the attacks.⁴⁰
- Growing frustrations as a result of anti-Western sentiments manifested in the form of attacks being perpetrated against a number of churches and businesses with Western connections: For example, on 18 December 2002 petrol bombs were thrown at Tempo Discotheque in northern Mombasa, which was operated jointly by a Kenyan and European investor.⁴¹

Motivation: ideological (Palestinian cause)

In the aftermath of the attack on the Paradise Hotel, and the unsuccessful missile attack against an Israeli plane on 28 November 2002, a Lebanese group – describing itself as 'The Government of Universal Palestine in Exile, The Army of Palestine' – announced in a statement (faxed to international press agencies) that attacks had been carried out to mark the eve of the 55th anniversary of the 1947 decision to partition Palestine, which subsequently led to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. Although the group did not refer to the specific attacks, its statement noted that two of its units had been sent to 'Kenya to strike at Israeli interests'.⁴² Despite this statement, investigators suspected that al-Qa'eda based in Somalia was in fact responsible for the attacks. Certainly, according to CNN, al-Qa'eda claimed responsibility for the attacks in its statement: 'This statement comes as a challenge to the American enemy and to let it know it's capable of reaching any place in the world.'⁴³

Although the identity of the group actually responsible for the terrorist attacks and the exact nature of their underlying motivation are not entirely clear,

they do point to some form of ideological motivation, whether the Palestinian cause or perceived US hegemony, including the occupation of Muslim territories more generally as a primary cause of al-Qa'eda, or even a combination thereof.

MOROCCO, MAY 2003

The attacks

On 16 May 2003 five attacks (involving multiple attackers), executed almost simultaneously throughout the Moroccan city of Casablanca, left 45 people dead – including 12 suicide bombers – and more than 100 people injured.⁴⁴ Except for the synchronised timing of the explosions, Moroccan officials described the bombings as relatively unsophisticated. The killing and injuring of so many local citizens came as a shock to ordinary Moroccans, who were not accustomed to such acts of violence and terrorism.

The attacks occurred between 21:30 and 22:00 on that day:⁴⁵

- In the first attack, three suicide bombers detonated their explosives in Casa d'Espagne (a Spanish social club and restaurant) on Lafayette Street. Twenty people were killed in this attack.
- One of two suicide bombers carrying or wearing explosives successfully detonated his device at the Farah Maghreb Hotel. Before entering, a security guard attempted to stop the suicide bomber, but was stabbed to death by the latter before proceeding into the hotel. The second suicide bomber's device did not detonate and he was subsequently arrested. At least eight people were killed in this attack.
- Two suicide bombers attempted to enter an Italian restaurant, the owner of which was apparently Jewish, near the Belgian Consulate in downtown Casablanca. They were, however, denied entry and detonated their explosives in the street. Two police officials outside the Belgian Consulate were killed; a security guard was injured and hospitalised; and the Belgian Consulate was damaged in the blast.
- Two suicide bombers detonated their devices at the Cercle de l'Alliance Israélite. The club was closed at the time of the attack, limiting the casualties to the deaths of three people, two of whom were the bombers.

- A suicide bomber attempted to detonate a device at a Jewish cemetery, but was chased away by a crowd. He then detonated the device a distance from the cemetery and was the only casualty.

Notable characteristics

Profile of the attackers

In the aftermath of the attacks, a number of those responsible, all Moroccan nationals, were arrested, including Mohammed el Omari, who had been the suicide bomber's group ringleader; and Rachid Jalil, Yassine Lahnech, and Hassan Taoussi, who were caught before executing their attacks.⁴⁶ Saad Houssaini, one of the founders of the Moroccan Islamic Combat Group (MICG) that was responsible for the attacks, was sentenced in 2009 to 15 years' imprisonment for his role.

Motivation: socio-economic

With respect to the Casablanca suicide bombings, a distinction is noticeable between the social classes of those who planned the attacks and of those who executed them. While the latter came from Sidi Moumen, a very poor neighbourhood, Saad Houssaini (also known as 'the chemist'), who was a founder of the MICG terrorist group responsible, came from a more privileged background. The son of a professor, Houssaini had studied chemistry in college and won a Moroccan governmental scholarship to attend graduate school at the University of Valencia in Spain.⁴⁷

While poor socio-economic conditions are not the only facilitator for recruitment to terrorist causes, it is clear that they constitute an important factor, not least in terms of contributing towards a general sense of hopelessness and the challenge facing many people in such circumstances of finding some purpose and meaning for their lives. Limited educational and employment opportunities, at least in the case of the 2003 attacks in Morocco, were in all probability contributing factors for the eventual recruitment of those who carried out the attacks, not least by rendering them more susceptible to extremists and their promises of significant rewards that would be received in the 'Hereafter'.

More generally, poor living conditions can become fertile breeding grounds for extremists and the promulgation of jihadist propaganda. Acknowledging the adverse impact of these circumstances, King Mohammed VI on the second anniversary of the 2003 Casablanca bombings introduced a new initiative, costing

an estimated US\$ 114.3 million a year, ‘to provide basic infrastructure to millions, from adequate housing and drinking water to health care and education’.⁴⁸ Referred to as *Villes Sans Bidonvilles* or ‘Cities Without Slums’, the Moroccan Government hoped to dismantle slums around large cities through affordable housing initiatives.

Motivation: ideological (religious)

It is clear that Houssaini’s motivation was not socio-economic, but rather ideological. Despite his educational opportunities, he abandoned his graduate studies in Spain in the mid-1990s to go to Afghanistan, where he trained in al-Qa’eda camps and consulted with high-ranking members of the organisation, including Ayman al-Zawahiri and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. While there, he helped found the MICG-affiliated network, believed to also be responsible for the train bombings in Madrid in March 2004. After the 2003 attacks, Houssaini disappeared and established another network to recruit Moroccans to go to Iraq. He managed to send 18 recruits using funds he had obtained from MICG.⁴⁹

Motivation: ideological (al-Andalus)

In addition to any religious ideological motivation, the selected targets – which included Jewish and Spanish-owned restaurants and a Jewish cemetery – indicated very clear anti-Semitic and anti-Western, especially anti-Spanish, agendas. Similar to the 2002 attacks in Djerba, Tunisia and in Mombasa, Kenya, the Israeli-Palestinian situation may have been at least one strong motivational factor.

It is possible that one of the terrorist objectives was to target Spanish interests relating to the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, which are located within Morocco but are under Spanish authority. Additionally, it would appear that Spain is of great significance in terms of al-Qa’eda’s overall objective of re-establishing an Islamic caliphate, including through the ‘liberation’ of those states – which include Spain – that were formerly part of the historical Islamic Empire. Consequently, al-Qa’eda and AQLIM often refer to the glorious era of Andalusia, headed by Yusuf ibn Tashfin and his son Ali ibn Yusuf, who during the 11th century personified the height of the western Islamic empire.

Such sentiments are reflected in a statement made by Abdelmalek Droukdel on 9 January 2007: ‘We embrace Jihad to fulfil an ineluctable Divine plan which has been imposed on us since the fall of al-Andalus and the sale of Palestine, and since we were divided by the borders which the invaders invented.’ In a similar

vein, in his video recorded on 19 September 2007 entitled ‘The Power of Truth’, Ayman al-Zawahiri explicitly linked Spain and the mission of AQLIM: ‘Restoring al-Andalus is a trust on the shoulders of the nation in general and on your shoulders in particular, and you will not be able to do that without first cleansing the Muslim Maghreb of the children of France and Spain, who have come back again after your fathers and grandfathers sacrificed their blood cheaply in the path of God to expel them.’⁵⁰

Reaction of the Moroccan authorities

In the aftermath of the 2003 Casablanca bombings, the Moroccan authorities arrested an estimated 3 000 suspects and charged 87 people for their direct involvement in the attacks.⁵¹ This over-reaction in the form of mass arrests had negative consequences. As will be explained in Chapter 5, all counter-measures have consequences, and the eventual success of any counter-terrorism strategy depends on two primary variables: the ability of authorities to limit this negative fallout; and its ability to capitalise on mistakes made by terrorists and turning it to opportunities.

EGYPT, 2004–2006

The attacks of 7 and 30 April 2005

Cairo, 7 April 2005

On 7 April 2005, a suicide bomber, identified as Hassan Rafaat Ahmed Bashandi (an engineering student at Egypt’s Zagazig University), killed himself, an American and two French nationals in an attack on Cairo’s Khan al-Khalil bazaar. Using a motorcycle, he detonated a bag of TNT and nails. The blast also injured at least 18 others, of whom three were US citizens. It is possible, as was suggested initially by Egyptian government spokespersons, that the bomber detonated his bomb prematurely and had in fact intended to cause more casualties.

In the days following the bombing, the Islamic Glory Brigades in the Land of the Nile, a previously unknown group, claimed in an internet posting⁵² that it had committed the attack, although whether or not this was the case remains a matter of doubt (see below). Police stated that they had apprehended seven of the eight suspects in relation to this bombing, although there were continuing investigations at the time such comments were made in the villages of Ammar and Ezbet al-Gabalawi, from where the attackers originally came.⁵³

Cairo, 30 April 2005

Shortly afterwards, on 30 April 2005, a suicide bomber (Ihab Youssri Yassin, aged 24) killed himself and wounded seven others outside the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. Four of the seven wounded were foreign tourists (an Israeli couple, a Swedish man, and an Italian woman). Local investigators believed that Yassin's intended target was a tour bus. After being pursued by local police, however, he had jumped from the October 6th Bridge, detonating his bomb while falling towards the Abdel-Moneim Riyadh Square below, outside the Egyptian Museum.

This bomber had also played an important role during the previous bombing on 7 April. When two of Yassin's accomplices (Gamal Ahmed Abdel-Aal and Ashraf Said Youssef) were arrested in connection with the earlier bombing, it is believed that Yassin expedited the timetable of planned attacks.

The bombing of 30 April 2005 was conducted in coordination with the shooting attack that followed shortly thereafter when two women, Negat Yassin and Iman Ibrahim Khamis, opened fire on a tourist bus before turning their guns on themselves. The two women had followed the bus in their car, before stopping their vehicle and opening fire, injuring two Egyptian nationals in the process, although no serious injuries were caused to the passengers. Both attacks occurred within two hours of each other and at locations less than four kilometres apart.⁵⁴ Both attackers were linked to Ihab Youssri Yassin: Negat Yassin (aged 22) was Ihab's younger sister, and Iman Khamis (aged 19) was his fiancée.⁵⁵ While multiple groups have since claimed responsibility for the two attacks, it is unclear what organisational links the assailants actually had.

Notable characteristics

Profile of the attackers

Ashraf Saeed Youssef (aged 27), who according to security officials was one of the masterminds of the 7 April suicide bombing, was arrested on 30 April 2005. He, however, died on 20 May 2005, a week after he was admitted to hospital following an attempted suicide by 'hitting his head several times against the wall of his prison cell'.⁵⁶ Prior to that, on 28 April 2005, Mohammed Soliman Youssef, the cousin of Ashraf Youssef, also died in police custody, under suspicion of torture.⁵⁷

Following the incidents on 30 April 2005, the Interior Ministry acknowledged that the latest bombing was most probably attributable to the police roundup of possible suspects that had followed the previous bazaar bombing in early April. In particular, it confirmed that police, earlier in the day on 30 April and prior to

the attacks, had captured two suspects linked to the 7 April attacks, identified as Ashraf Saeed Youssef and Gamal Ahmed Abdel Aal.

Motivation: ideological

Although it is evident that Westerners were the intended targets of both attacks, what is less clear are the exact motivational causes behind them, especially in the absence of any clear involvement of a larger terrorist organisation or cell. At the very least, on the basis of the relationships that existed between the attackers with respect to the second attack, it is possible that the individuals concerned were radicalised and operationalised by each other. Therefore, although a number of organisations did try to claim responsibility for the attacks, this may have been due to their propaganda value rather than to any clear links to or actual involvement with them. One other, wider observation here is that in the absence of a relationship with a terrorist organisation, the impact of these attacks was much reduced from what it might otherwise have been.

A further observation is that where cells are decentralised, it is more likely that individuals will become radicalised in 'isolation' by some form of ideological doctrine, such as through what can be read on the internet and/or recorded sermons. Certainly, this appears to have happened to Ihab Youssri Yassin, who used to lead a group of singers at his school before developing extremist views prior to the attack. As one friend commented: 'He forced his sisters to wear the Islamic veil and had gone too far into Islamic extremism.'⁵⁸

In terms of the modus operandi, the above-mentioned attack serves as an example that lone operators are more likely to be dependent upon and involve close family members and friends to plan and execute an attack, in the absence of the support and resources of a terrorist organisation.

Motivation: repression

At the time of the attacks, the opposition Al-Ghad Party attributed the suicide operations to the 'environment of oppression and depression' in reference to the emergency laws in Egypt in effect since 1981.⁵⁹

Attacks between 7 October 2004 and 22 July 2005 in the Sinai

Taba, 7 October 2004

The Taba bombings occurred at 21:50 on 7 October 2004 when a suicide bomber in an Isuzu pickup truck, filled with 200 kg of explosives, rammed into the lobby of the Hilton Hotel (close to the Israeli border), causing the collapse of one side of the 10 storey building. A second device was then detonated near the hotel's swimming pool.⁶⁰ The attack killed at least 35 people and wounded more than 120. Most of the victims were Egyptian and Israeli, but also included one Russian as well as Italian fatalities.⁶¹

Two smaller explosions occurred in the backpacker resort of Ras al-Sultan (55 km south of Taba) at 23:30, shortly after the attacks on the Hilton Hotel. One explosion killed two people who were close to a restaurant after a suicide attacker detonated the taxi he was driving as it approached the dining room of the Moon Island Resort. Additionally, two Egyptian employees were killed on impact, while another Egyptian and two Israelis later died of their wounds. A second suicide attacker, who tried to enter the same restaurant, detonated his device prematurely, killing only himself.⁶²

Profile of the attackers

One week after the attack, the Egyptian Interior Ministry suggested that the attacks had not in fact been part of a suicide operation. Rather they suggested that Iyad Sayyid Salih, a Palestinian national, and Sulayman Ahmad Salih, a Bedouin, who had carried out the attacks, had been killed while trying to escape the scene of the blast because of a mistake in setting the timer.⁶³ Although the true intent of the two attackers is unclear, their actions were significant not only in terms of the immediate damage caused, but also because they appear to have been partly responsible for triggering a new wave of coordinated attacks in the Sinai that included a combination of suicide bombings and the conventional use of explosives.

Sharm el-Sheikh, 22 July 2005

On 22 July 2005 at 01:15, three bombers executed assaults and were killed in the course of their attacks on Sharm el-Sheikh's Ghazala Gardens Hotel, a nearby car park, and a busy market area.

With respect to the attack on the hotel, two militants drove a white pickup truck to Naama Bay. One got out along the way in a car park near the Ghazala

Gardens Hotel where he planted a small explosive device in a suitcase, rigged with a timer. Meanwhile the other militant drove the truck, with an estimated 300 kg of explosives, into the front driveway of the Ghazala Gardens Hotel where it exploded.

The second device, which was planted in the suitcase in the car park, exploded as people fled the first attack, killing at least seven people. This second attack is a clear example of a multi device trap as described in Chapter 2. Expecting that people would flee from the first attack to an open area, this second device was planted in the nearby car park, where it was timed to detonate to coincide with the likely arrival of those people fleeing the first attack, in order to cause maximum casualties. Although this second device achieved its objective, there would have been even more casualties had a suicide bomber – as a ‘thinking’ bomb – detonated the device at the most deadly moment. By relying upon a timer instead of using a person or even a remote-controlled device, those planning the attack had no real control over when to detonate the secondary or trap device to maximum effect.

In the second series of attacks, a car bomb exploded in a parking area near the Mövenpick Hotel. In the third explosion in a car park in the Old Market, about 4 km away from the Ghazala Gardens Hotel and the Mövenpick Hotel, a further 17 people were killed. During this latter attack, two militants had abandoned a green Isuzu pickup truck packed with explosives that was detonated by a timer.⁶⁴

According to governmental officials, a total of 67 people were killed, including 16 foreigners, and an estimated 110 were wounded. The casualties included British, Russian, Dutch, Kuwaiti, Saudi, Qatari, and Egyptian nationals.⁶⁵ Certainly, the Sharm el-Sheikh bombings demonstrated an escalation from the Taba bombings in terms of their scale and impact.

Profile of the attackers

The three suicide bombers involved in the attacks on 22 July 2005 were identified as Mahmoud Mohammed Hammad, Mohammed Awdah Said and Yusef Badran (also suspected of involvement in the Taba bombings on 7 October 2004), and had been recruited by Moussa Ghoneim (also known as Moussa Badran).⁶⁶ Those responsible for the attacks came from El Arish, just 56 km from Rafa, which hosts a large Palestinian community who fled the Gaza Strip in the aftermath of conflict between Israel and Hamas.⁶⁷

After the mass arrests of approximately 3 000 Bedouin community members in the Sinai and their subsequent interrogation, Egyptian security service identified the following individuals as providing the leadership and logistical support for the Sharm el-Sheikh attack:

- Muhammad Ahmed Flayfil, a Bedouin from the Tarabeem tribe located in north-east Sinai: The younger brother of Suleiman Ahmed Saleh Flayfil, who was killed in the Taba attacks, he had been involved in extremist activities since 1995. Both Suleiman and Muhammad Flayfil were associated with Ayad Said Salah, a Palestinian Hamas supporter from El-Arish and the ringleader of the Taba attack. During the Taba attacks, Muhammad had detonated the Ras al-Shitan car bomb and managed to flee the scene. With both Suleiman Flayfil and Ayad Said Salah killed in the Taba attacks, Muhammad had formed a new terror cell among the Bedouin Tarabeem tribe, which was eventually found to have been responsible for the Sharm el-Sheikh attacks. One week after the bombings, Egyptian police killed him together with his wife in the Ataqa Mountains, west of the Suez Canal.⁶⁸
- Moussa Mohamed Salem Badran: A known extremist, he was arrested and harshly interrogated by the Egyptian security service, primarily because his younger brother, Yusef Badran, was a close associate of Muhammad Ahmed Flayfil, the prime suspect in the Taba attacks. After he was released – a few months later without being charged – he fled his family home and joined the group led by Muhammad Ahmed Flayfil in the mountains of central Sinai from where the Sharm el-Sheikh attacks were planned. On his way to meet Dr Khaled Musaid Salem and Tilib Murdi Soliman, Badran was shot and killed by security forces near Jabel Halal, approximately 60 km south-east of El-Arish.⁶⁹
- Dr Khaled Musaid Salem from Ismailia: He was already a suspect following the attacks in Taba. However, only after the Sharm el-Sheikh bombing did the Egyptian security service discover that Salem was also the cell leader responsible for the attack on the Hilton Hotel in Taba. On 28 September 2005, Salem and Tilib Murdi Soliman were fatally wounded in a shootout with Egyptian police on their way to meet Moussa Badran near Jabel Halal about 60 km south-east of El-Arish. Yunis Mohammed Alian, a third suspect in the vehicle mentioned above, was arrested. Police found ammunition, an explosive device, timer, false number plates, a video camera, and a tape-recorded message before the Sharm el-Sheikh attacks in which members of the group explained their roles. It also

showed how a different suicide operation, the al-Jora bombing on 15 August 2005 that had damaged a multi-national Canadian observer force vehicle, had been carried out.⁷⁰

- Tilib Murdi Soliman, from the El-Arish region: He was considered to be the mastermind of the Sharm el-Sheikh bombings, together with Salem. He was also affiliated to the cell that executed the attacks in Taba. Operationally, Soliman was an explosives expert, trained by Mohamed Sabbah Hussein on how to build electric detonators and assemble improvised explosive devices. Through his connections with the Bedouin tribes in the area, he managed to collect explosives from unexploded military ordinances left from the wars between Israel and Egypt. Through his expertise, Soliman supervised the assembling of the car bombs and built the detonators used in the Sharm el-Sheikh bombing.⁷¹
- Ihab Mohamed Rabia: A Bedouin from Sheik Zawaid, El-Arish region, he was a close associate of Salem and was often seen with Badran.
- Osama al-Nakhlawi, from El-Arish: He worked as an electrician. According to security officials he assisted in the assembly of the car bomb used in the Taba and Sharm el-Sheikh attacks. Al-Nakhlawi was arrested on 12 August 2005, together with many others in the El-Arish region.⁷²
- Yunis Mohammed Alian: He was a car thief, also from El-Arish region in Sinai, and was affiliated to the local terror cell that committed the Taba attacks. After being arrested following a shootout together with Salem and Soliman, Alian was put on trial for his role in the Sharm el-Sheikh attacks. According to investigations, Alian was responsible for getting the two vehicles used in the attack. He also confessed during interrogation that he had assisted in loading the vehicles with explosives. Alian was sentenced to death on 30 November 2006, along with Osama Al-Nakhlawi and Mohamed Sabbah Hussein.⁷³
- Mohamed Sabbah Hussein: A former employee of the Egyptian Sinai irrigation system authority, he opened a small business repairing electrical home appliances in El-Arish. Hussein was recruited by Ayad Said Salah and asked to modify electric timer detonators, which he did with washing machine timers. On 22 October 2004, Hussein was arrested for his role in providing the timers used in the Taba attacks. Although already sentenced to death for his role in these earlier attacks, and already in prison during the subsequent Sharm el-Sheikh attacks, he was further charged with and convicted of a similar role for designing and assembling detonators used during the Sharm el-Sheikh attacks, for which he received a second death sentence.⁷⁴

Similarities between the Taba and Sharm el-Sheikh attacks

In addition to the links between the different key players involved in the two attacks just described, the following similarities between the Taba and Sharm el-Sheikh attacks may also be noted:

- In both attacks pickup trucks were loaded with explosives, hidden under vegetables, to gain access to the target.⁷⁵
- The suicide bomber who triggered the blast at the Ghazala Garden Hotel was one of five suspects at large following the earlier October 2004 attacks.
- Both attacks involved multiple attacks that required more extensive and careful planning.
- The symbolism of the timing of the attacks was important as both bombings occurred close to or on national holidays:⁷⁶
 - Taba was attacked after the commemoration of Egypt's military successes against Israel in 1973.
 - The Sharm el-Sheikh blasts fell on the anniversary of the 1952 revolution against the Egyptian monarchy. It is interesting to note that the bombings on 23 July 2005 came one day before a local court heard a case involving suspects linked to the Taba attacks.

Public holidays not only have the potential to maximise the number of casualties, but the selection of a particular public holiday may provide additional insights into the message behind the attacks. In relation to these attacks, both were carried out on days associated with Egyptian patriotism. In executing attacks on these days, those behind the attacks were probably making known their dissatisfaction with the Egyptian state in relation to Egypt's relationship with Israel and for not doing more in support of the Palestinian cause.

The attack of 24 April 2006

On 24 April 2006 at 19:15, three suicide bombers detonated their explosive devices in the Ghazala supermarket as well as the Nelson and Aladdin restaurants in central Dahab, killing 23 and injuring a further 62 people, among them 20 foreigners.⁷⁷ Similar to the Taba and Sharm el-Sheikh attacks, the timing of these attacks was significant as they occurred during the festival of Shamm el-Nessim (celebrating the harvest), as well as during the Coptic Christian Easter weekend. Neither

festivals had anything to do with the Muslim calendar, and could be seen as an attack against anything un-Islamic.

Profile of the attackers

Nasser Khamis Al-Mallahi, from El-Arish and a lawyer by profession, replaced Dr Khaled Musaid Salem after he was killed as the head of the 'Tawhid wal Jihad' in the Sinai. Al-Mallahi subsequently headed the cell responsible for masterminding the Dahab attacks. In preparation, he sent Ahmed Mohammed Al-Koreimi, Mohammed Abdelaziz Nafei, and Atallah Al-Korm, all of Palestinian descent, to the Gaza Strip for training in weapons and bomb making. Al-Mallahi was killed by security forces on 26 April, two days after the attacks, near El-Arish. His aide, Mohamed Abdallah Elian, also from El-Arish, was captured.⁷⁸

The attacks of 26 April 2006

Two days after the bombings in Dahab, at 10:30 on 26 April 2006, suicide attackers targeted vehicles near the main Multinational Force and Observer (MFO) peace-keepers base, close to the Rafah border crossing with Gaza.

The first suicide bomber, a man driving a pickup truck, intercepted a peace-keeping SUV, forcing it to stop. He then jumped out of his truck and flung himself at the SUV, blowing him and the vehicle up in the process. This occurred near to the MFO's base in Gura, which is situated approximately 25 km west of the Gaza Strip. The second attack occurred some 35 minutes later, when a suicide bomber on a bicycle struck the car of his target, Egyptian police Brigadier General Mohammed al-Zamlout.⁷⁹ According to news reports after the attack, Palestinian police had managed to foil a third attack, which was an attempt by militants to blow up the Karni crossing between Israel and Gaza. Three officers and two militants were wounded in an exchange of fire, following which police found hundreds of kilograms of explosives in the car.⁸⁰

Notable characteristics

Profile of the attackers

The two suicide bombers were later identified as Salman Muhammad Salim (aged 19) and Id Hammad al-Tarawi (aged 25), who were responsible for the first and second attacks respectively. Also involved in the attacks were Ayman and Yusri

Mohareb, two brothers, who had crossed into the Gaza Strip to prepare for the operation.⁸¹

After both bombings, Mohammed Shehta, an Egyptian, together with a Palestinian suspect, were arrested near Jabel Maghara (Maghara Mountain), south-east of Al-Jora. A third suspect was fatally wounded in the operation. Two of the three Dahab suicide bombers were driven to their respective targets on 24 April, and the third suicide attacker on 26 April, from the Bedouin village of Sheikh Zuweid.⁸²

Following police operations conducted during May 2006, Egyptian police managed to dismantle the remainder of the Tawhid wal Jihad cell in the Sinai:⁸³

- Eid Salama El-Tirawi, who was the deputy of Nasser al-Mallahi and the uncle of Eid Hammad al-Tarawi (one of the two suicide bombers near the Rafah crossing), was killed on 1 May 2006.
- Mounir Mohamed Moharib, a car thief who supplied the cars for the Dahab attacks, was killed on 1 May 2006.
- Suleiman Salma El-Hamdin, a drug smuggler (who played an important role with his knowledge of smuggler routes) managed to escape on 28 September 2005 when Khaled Musaid Salem (cell leader behind the Taba Hilton Attack) was killed, but was himself fatally wounded on 1 May 2006.
- Arafa Auda Ali was killed on 19 May as he tried to throw an explosive device at members of the security forces chasing him. He had replaced Eid Salama El-Tirawi, following the latter's death on 1 May 2006, as the leader of what had remained of the Tawhid wal Jihad network in Sinai.
- Salman Hadi Saleem (aged 27), the older brother of Salman Mohamed Saleem (who blew himself up on 24 April 2006) and of Salman Salman Saleem (who was killed by Egyptian police on 30 April 2006), was captured on 31 May 2006.
- Mohammed Eid Hamdan, the brother of one of the Dahab suicide bombers, turned himself in.
- Hamdi Abu Gil, a Bedouin from Sheikh Zuweid, managed to escape.

All of these people implicated were Egyptian nationals.

Involvement of close family members

An important feature of these attacks was the close family links between those responsible. Following the Dahab attack, Elian Suleiman El-Hamrawi and his brother

Hussein were arrested in north Sinai. Three other suspects, also brothers, were killed in a gun battle the same day on the outskirts of Al-Arish in north Sinai.⁸⁴

Similar to other suicide attacks around the continent, the involvement of close relatives is an area of growing concern. Such trends challenge suggestions that family members might be better placed than non-family members to dissuade potential bombers from executing their planned attacks. Furthermore, such links and involvement of family members pose additional and particular challenges to the security services in terms of preventing the attacks, not least in terms of assimilating the necessary prior intelligence, which is unlikely to be readily forthcoming from a tightly knit family or community. Indeed, it is possible that knowledge of the participation of close family members might even enhance the resolve of the bombers to execute their attacks.

Motivation: ideological

According to Egyptian security officials, the above incidents were the work of domestic militants, despite some indications that these perpetrators might have had international assistance or influence.

A group calling itself 'Brigades of the Martyr Abdullah Azzam' – apparently part of the al-Qa'eda network – claimed responsibility for the Taba and Sharm el-Sheikh attacks. Following the Sharm el-Sheikh bombings, the group stated that the attacks were 'in response to the crimes committed by the forces of international evil, which are spilling the blood of Muslims in Iraq, Afghanistan and Chechnya'.⁸⁵ Similarly, another group – referring to itself as Jama'a al-Islamiyya Al-Alamiya (World Islamist Group) – also claimed responsibility, stating that it acted to avenge 'the Palestinian and Arab martyrs dying in Palestine and Iraq'.⁸⁶ In early October 2004 just prior to the Taba attacks, Ayman al-Zawahiri, then al-Qa'eda's number two leader, had called upon Muslims around the world to attack Israeli, Western and Asian interests, specifically mentioning Egypt (possibly due to its relative open policy towards Israel).⁸⁷

Motivation: marginalisation and socio-economic

The attacks were also motivated by the historical tensions existing between Egyptian nationals and Bedouins at that time. In particular, following the return of the Sinai to Egypt in 1982, after an agreement had been reached between Israel and Egypt, the Bedouins complained of being treated as second-class citizens by their

fellow Egyptians. Sentiments of marginalisation were also prominent prior to the bombings.

The Bedouin community further complained that the Egyptian government had economically marginalised its tribes and their members. Since the Bedouin community is traditionally nomadic, a large number of Egyptians were internally moved from other parts of the country to the Sinai area following its return to Egypt. Such transfers were, however, problematic. In particular, many of those Egyptians moved into traditionally Bedouin areas did not consider Bedouins to be Egyptians, while security personnel, who were only willing to protect the tourism industry, did little to address local tensions. An additional and significant source of tension was the lack of government investment in and development of local communities, coupled with a general lack of respect for Bedouin values and customs. In summary, the Bedouin community simply did not share in the financial benefits of the tourism industry.

Furthermore, Bedouins felt culturally marginalised. Considering the existing levels of and grounds for resentment and distrust, community members also complained that security officials were engaged in other provocative activities such as mass arrests, as well as the humiliation of their tribal leaders and women during counter-terrorist operations. The negative effects of such conduct were especially profound within Bedouin culture, which places great emphasis on respect. In disregarding this basic element, the members of this community felt that the fundamental fabric of their culture and identity was being attacked. These sources of tension did not improve following the bombings. The significant resentment felt by members of the local community prior to the terrorist attacks regarding the limited presence of the security services in their community to protect them was subsequently replaced by the over-deployment of the police – who were often corrupt – around Bedouin communities, which prevented them from moving freely.⁸⁸

In conclusion, feelings of marginalisation and unfairness, as well as the socio-economic conditions among the Bedouin communities in the Sinai, were significant contributing factors to these suicide operations.

SOMALIA, 2006

The attacks of 18 September and 30 November 2006

Baidoa, 18 September 2006

On 18 September 2006, the first suicide bombing in Somali history occurred, targeting President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) outside the Parliament building. The blast and a subsequent gun battle killed 11 people, including Yusuf's brother.⁸⁹ Within weeks, the Islamic Courts Union – a group of Shari'ah courts, which became united in order to form a rival administration to the TFG – declared holy war on Ethiopia (before the AMISOM mission started in February 2007).

This attack serves as a clear example of the use of suicide attacks as a tactic to assassinate high-ranking officials (discussed in the following two chapters). Following this attack, the TFG lost a further number of high-ranking security officials and political leaders through roadside and suicide bombings.

Baidoa, 30 November 2006

On 30 November 2006, according to General Ali Hussein (the then Somali police commander), three suicide bombers (including one veiled woman), in two cars, approached a checkpoint about 5 km outside Baidoa. They detonated themselves when police tried to search their vehicles at the roadblock.⁹⁰ These explosions resulted in the death of 12 people – one police officer, the bombers, and the occupants of a nearby vehicle – and the wounding of four others. Although these attacks were discriminate in the sense that they specifically targeted security personnel, they also involved civilian casualties.

This type of attack was representative of the new style of terrorist attack that was to follow, as well as being illustrative of the vulnerability of security checkpoints.

MOROCCO, 2007

The attacks of 11 March 2007 and 14 April 2007

Casablanca, 11 March 2007

On 11 March 2007, Abdelfettah Raydi (aged 23) detonated his explosive vest in an internet café in Casablanca, killing himself and wounding three others. His accomplice, Youssef Khoudri (aged 26), dropped his suicide belt and ran away, but was later arrested.

During the ensuing investigations, a number of other suspects committed suicide or were killed in Casablanca in the course of raids carried out by the security services on 10 April 2007. More specifically, one suspect, Mohamed Rachidi (alias Salah or Mustapha) blew himself up in the early hours of the morning without causing other casualties. A second suspect, Mohamed Mentala (alias Warda), was shot dead by the police before he could detonate his explosive vest. Another, Ayyoub Raydi, jumped down from the roof of his house and detonated an explosive device in mid air, killing himself and one police officer, and wounding two other police officials as well as a child. Rachidi and Mentala had also been implicated in the earlier May 2003 bombings in Casablanca. Later that evening, a fourth suspect detonated his explosives, injuring five people including two police officials, as he blew himself up in the main road of the Hay al Farah district. Ayyoub Raydi, the brother of the suicide bomber, Abdelfettah Raydi, also killed himself that day.⁹¹

Casablanca, 14 April 2007

On 14 April 2007, two brothers detonated their suicide vests in Casablanca, near the US consulate in Casablanca and the American Language Centre in the Boulevard Moulay Youssef, without causing any casualties. The bombers were identified as Omar Maha (aged 23), who had been one of the suspects in the March 2007 suicide bombings in Casablanca, and Mohamed Maha (aged 32), who was previously unknown to the security forces.⁹²

These incidents sparked debate whether those involved in the explosions in Morocco in March and April were in contact with AQLIM in Algeria. Although these attacks were executed a month before the first suicide attacks in Algeria, Morocco was not new to suicide attacks. Additionally, according to investigators the Morocco devices differed from those used in Algeria: unlike those in Algeria,

where plastic explosives were reportedly used, the devices used in Morocco were homemade, using acetone and cleaning supplies.⁹³

EGYPT, JANUARY 2010

Just after midnight on 1 January 2010, the Church of the Two Saints, a Coptic church in Alexandria, was attacked, leaving 21 people dead and an estimated 79 people injured.⁹⁴ Although officials initially thought that the attack was caused by a car bomb, the Interior Ministry later stated that it was in fact ‘carried out by a suicide bomber who died among the crowd’.⁹⁵ This was confirmed when a severed head thought to belong to the bomber was found at the scene. Police also suspected that a severed foot, which the blast had thrown over the roof of a mosque across the street from the church, also belonged to the suspected attacker. Officials suspected that the bomber, whom they indicated as being in his thirties, had planned to enter the church, but had been blocked by police guards at its gates, leading to the earlier detonation.⁹⁶

Forensic testing confirmed that the explosive device used consisted of between ten and 15 kg of TNT and that nails and ball bearings were used as shrapnel.⁹⁷

Notable characteristics

Profile of the attacker and state involvement

On 7 February 2010, one month after the attack, some members of the diplomatic community in Egypt called for an investigation into allegations that former Interior Minister Habib el-Adly had masterminded the attack with the intention of attributing it to Islamists. At a time of political instability in Egypt, it was alleged that the commission of a major attack by foreign Islamists would be used to justify a government crackdown on Islamists in an attempt to increase Western support for the regime.⁹⁸

According to UK diplomatic sources quoted in the reports, el-Adly had built up a special security system that employed a number of former radical Islamists, drug dealers, and some security firms to carry out acts of sabotage around the country in case the regime was under threat of collapse. Proclamation 1450 also suggested that Major Fathi Abdelwahid began on 11 December 2009 to prepare Ahmed Mohamed Khaled, who had served 11 years in Egyptian prisons, to

contact an extremist group called Jundullah and coordinate with it the attack on the Alexandria church. Khaled reportedly told the group that he could assist with providing weapons that he had allegedly obtained from Gaza, and that the attack was intended to ‘discipline the Copts’. After contact was made, a Jundullah leader, Mohammed Abdelhadi, agreed to cooperate in the plot and recruited a man named Abdelrahman Ahmed Ali to drive a car wired with explosives, park it in front of the church, and then leave it to be detonated by remote control. Abdelwahid, however, detonated the car before Ali got out.⁹⁹

Motivation: sectarian tension

Despite rumours of a government conspiracy, an underlying motivation may have been sectarian tensions between Muslim and Christian communities that have existed since the defeat of al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya in the late 1990s. It would appear that the situation might also have been exacerbated by the involvement of the security forces in activities targeting Copts. Despite being one of the oldest Christian communities in the region (and the broader Middle East), Egypt still experiences sporadic clashes between Muslims and Christians, as illustrated by the following examples:

- On 14 April 2006, a Muslim worker, whom authorities later described as ‘un-balanced’, attacked three churches in Alexandria, killing a 78-year-old Coptic Christian. One person was later killed during the clashes between Copts and Muslims that followed the attacks.¹⁰⁰
- In May 2007, following an attack on the Deir Abu Fana monastery near Minya (southern Egypt), there was a number of protests across the country: ‘The violence erupted when local Muslims claimed that expansion work on the monastery was being carried out illegally on state-owned land. The attack by local Muslims resulted in the serious injury of three Christians at the monastery; three monks were also kidnapped [but later] released, [while] a Muslim man was killed in the cross-fire.’¹⁰¹ According to reports, the background to this incident can be traced to 1977 when villagers burnt the church down before completion. It is also cited as an example of government reluctance to grant churches restoration permits, considering that the community has been waiting for a permit to complete the building of their church since 1977. Furthermore, many violations continue to be perpetrated against the Copts, which exceeded 70 cases in 2008 alone. These have ranged from ‘attacks on churches and monasteries

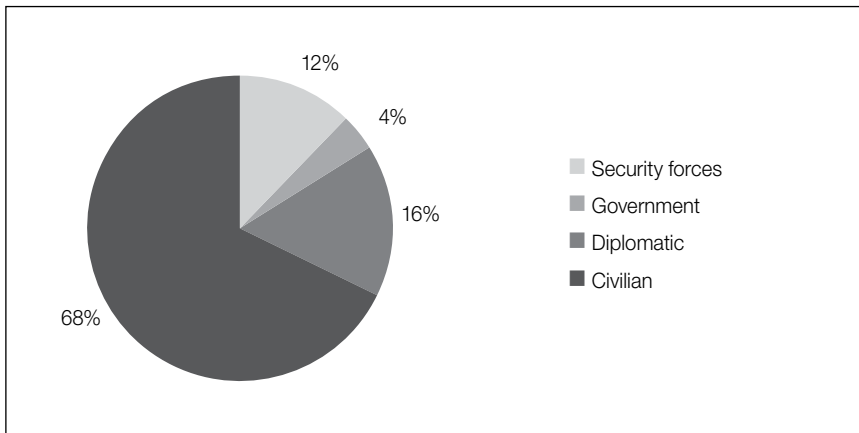
such as that of the Virgin Mary in Dronka and Abu Fana in Qasr Hur, to those on congregations. Even those praying within their homes are assaulted. Copts are prevented from praying and from building churches, so as not to hurt the feelings and sentiments of Muslims.¹⁰² Such issues remain significant sources of tension.

- On 29 May 2008, four Copts were killed in a jewellery heist in Cairo. According to police, an Islamist cell was responsible for the attack.¹⁰³
- On 18 April 2009, Muslim gunmen shot dead two Coptic Christians and wounded a third as they left church after an Easter vigil in Hagaza village, near the town of Qena (southern Egypt).¹⁰⁴
- On 21 June 2009, a number of Copts were assaulted in the village of Ezbet Boushra-East (southern Egypt), a number of homes were destroyed, and their crops were uprooted by a group of Muslims. It was further alleged that this group was accompanied by members of the security establishment 'on suspicion that mass was being secretly celebrated at a priest's home'.¹⁰⁵
- On 21 November 2009, following reports of the sexual abuse of a Muslim girl aged 12, Guirgis Baroumi (aged 21), a Copt, was detained. Following the incident, Muslims started to attack Christians in Farshoot, as well as the neighbouring villages of Kom Ahmar, Shakiki and Ezbet Waziri. 'The mob looted, vandalized and burnt Coptic property, while Copts hid indoors fearing to venture out. Many Copts believe that the rape incident is by Muslims to use it as a pretext to start violence against them.'¹⁰⁶
- On 6 January 2010, six Copts and a police officer were killed, and another nine Copts injured, when gunmen opened fire on shoppers in Nagaa Hammadi in southern Egypt on their Christmas Eve.¹⁰⁷ In the aftermath of this attack, Coptic Christians clashed with Muslims and security forces during riots.¹⁰⁸
- On 13 March 2010, 24 people were injured in clashes between Christians and Muslims in the province of Mersa Matrouh when fighting broke out as Muslim residents began to hurl stones at Christian construction workers they believed to be building a church. An estimated 400 people were involved in the fighting, resulting in the arrest of 20 Muslims and Christians.¹⁰⁹

CONCLUSION

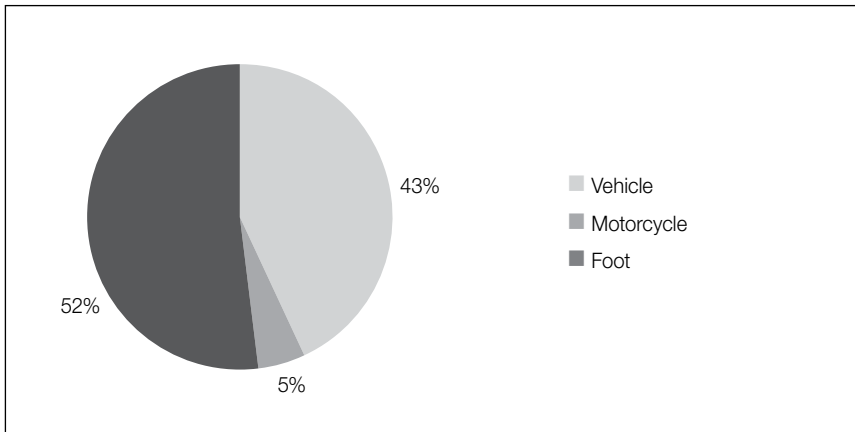
By way of conclusion, rather than rehashing some of the detail already discussed, significant identified trends are presented for reasons of increased clarity. In particular the target selection (figure 2) and the modus operandi (figure 3) of attacks committed during the period (1998–2010) will briefly be discussed. A comparison of this analysis with incidents that were part of a broader campaign will be presented in the concluding chapter in order to identify specific trends.

Figure 2 Target selection



Most attacks were directed against civilian targets (68 per cent), in particular against restaurants, hotels and places of worship. Attacks against the diplomatic community, which included the US embassy attacks in 1998, were followed by two smaller scale incidents on 14 April 2007 in Casablanca, Morocco. Suicide attacks directed against members of the security apparatus were limited to Somalia and Egypt.

Figure 3 Modus operandi



Most attacks (52 per cent) were committed by suicide bombers on foot, while in 43 per cent of the suicide operations suicide bombers delivered and executed their attacks through the use of vehicles in the form of cars or trucks. The use of motorcycles was limited to attacks executed in Egypt.

Another important feature of these operations that was identified in the course of the analysis in this chapter concerns the involvement of nationals and not solely foreigners in the planning and execution of ad hoc attacks. With the exception of the US embassy attacks in Nairobi and Dar es-Salaam in 1998, local individuals executed the suicide attacks examined. That said, the majority of these attacks did involve external as well as domestic factors, not least in terms of imported extremist Islamist ideology.

4 Suicide operations as part of a broader campaign

INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter examined incidents of suicide bombings whose characteristics suggest that they were more ad hoc in nature. In contrast, this chapter focuses on suicide operations that appear to be part of a broader terrorist campaign. In particular, it examines al-Qa'eda's exploitation of situations of instability in the Maghreb and the Horn of Africa through the suicide operations executed by al-Qa'eda in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb (AQLIM), al-Shabaab and Boko Haram.

During the period 2007–2011, AQLIM executed 33 attacks while al-Shabaab was responsible for 48 attacks. Both terrorist organisations used suicide attacks as part of a broader strategy that also included roadside bombings and conventional ambushes. Owing to the number of attacks perpetrated, illustrative examples are detailed in Annexure 1. Nigeria, through the activities of Boko Haram, became the third African hotspot for suicide operations in 2011, with eight suicide bombings occurring that year alone. Prior to examining the details of suicide operations, a brief overview of each of these three terrorist organisations will be given.

AL-QA'EDA IN THE LAND OF THE ISLAMIC MAGHREB

Creation of AQLIM and its adoption of suicide operations as a tactic

On 23 January 2007, the *Groupe Salafist pour la Prédication et la Combat* (GSPC) or Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (al-Jama'ah as-Salafiyah lid-Da'wah wal-Qital in Arabic), headed by Abdelmalek Droukdel (also known as Abu Musab Abdul Wadud), officially announced that it had changed its name to AQLIM. This was after Ayman al-Zawahiri announced on 11 September 2006 that the GSPC was welcome to join the ranks of al-Qa'eda. This development did not come as a complete surprise considering that the GSPC had openly supported al-Qa'eda for a number of years. One might even go so far as to suggest that al-Qa'eda's leadership had influenced the split of the GSPC from the *Groupe Islamique Armé* or GIA in 1998. It shared an ideological link with Osama bin Laden, initiated by the Algerian Afghan mujahideen, and al-Qa'eda had supported the training of GSPC members in Afghanistan until 2001. Through training Algerian nationals al-Qa'eda operatives had also been able to interact with the rank and file of the GSPC. Loyalty to bin Laden (following training in Afghanistan) subsequently led to clashes within the GSPC. As a result of the growing rift, al-Qa'eda's leadership sent Emad Abdelwahid Ahmed Alwan (a Yemeni national) to meet with Hassan Hattab (the founding member of the GSPC) in an attempt to convince GSPC's leadership to internationalise its operations. Alwan was instrumental in helping al-Qa'eda fighters from Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia settle in Yemen after the US invasion of Afghanistan.¹¹⁰

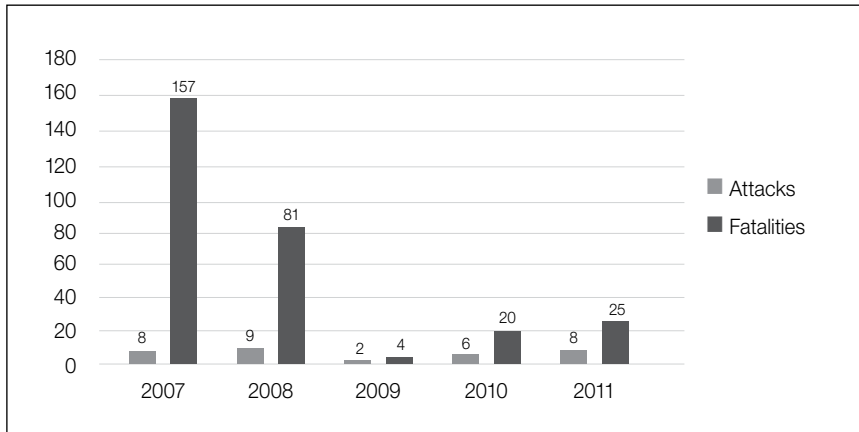
Spelling out the new strategic focus of AQLIM, Droukdel issued the following statement on 9 January 2007: 'We embrace Jihad to fulfil an ineluctable Divine plan which has been imposed on us since the fall of al-Andalus and the sale of Palestine, and since we were divided by the borders which the invaders invented.'¹¹¹ In his 19 September 2007 video entitled 'The Power of Truth', Ayman al-Zawahiri explicitly linked Spain with the mission of AQLIM: 'Restoring al-Andalus is a trust on the shoulders of the nation in general and on your shoulders in particular, and you will not be able to do that without first cleansing the Muslim Maghreb of the children of France and Spain, who have come back again after your fathers and grandfathers sacrificed their blood cheaply in the path of God to expel them.'¹¹²

In aligning itself with al-Qa'eda, the GSPC formally committed itself to support al-Qa'eda's causes, including in current hotspots such as Iraq and Afghanistan. It

further implied that AQLIM had changed its focus from a national (GSPC) to a regional (AQLIM) perspective that would involve attempts to enhance its influence in the Maghreb and broader Sahel. However, despite interaction and cooperation between both al-Qa'eda in Iraq and al-Qa'eda central, AQLIM still operated independently – remaining in control of its own recruitment, training and financing, as well as the planning and execution of attacks.

AQLIM executed its first suicide attacks four months after its name change, on 11 April 2007. These attacks were directed against the office of the Prime Minister and a police station, and set the theme for future attacks. In the interim period up to and including the end of 2011, AQLIM executed 33 such attacks.

Figure 4 AQLIM suicide attacks and fatalities since 2007



With respect to the drastic decline in the number of attacks in 2009 especially, and in the resultant casualties in the period 2009 to 2011, there are a number of possible explanations for this trend. One is that the intelligence-gathering activities and counter-measures deployed by Algeria were effective in reducing the number of attacks. Another is that suicide attacks were extremely unpopular due to their impact on innocent civilians, resulting in public outrage by the local populations and even disquiet within AQLIM itself. Within AQLIM, the targeting and killing of civilians was a contentious topic. For example, Brahim Boufarik (alias Abu El Para) surrendered after the 11 April 2007 attacks in protest against the killing of civilians. He and others were offered amnesty from prosecution. He made the following

statement: 'Several muftis inside our organisation are against using suicide bombings because they hit civilians. It appears that there is no difference between Droudel's approach and the GIA approach.'¹¹³

Religious scholars questioned GSPC/AQLIM's new tactics in the light of the Shari'a, considering them not to be just. Among them were Sheikh Abdenasser, a former member of the GSPC's Shura Council; Ahmed Jabri, also a member of the Shura Council; and Abu Abbas, the Shura councillor in Zone 2.¹¹⁴ Algeria is divided into zones, of which zones 2, 5 and 9 historically represented most of the GSPC's activities. Zone 2, which forms the central GSPC command, includes Algiers, Boumerdes, Tizi Ouzou and the Kabylie region.¹¹⁵

In contrast, other attacks using alternative tactics in other parts of the continent, which resulted in even more casualties, did not attract similar criticisms. Certainly, this suggests that the relationship between a terrorist organisation and the power and influence of local public sentiment – that may differ from country to country – may impact upon the nature or even carrying out of suicide operations. For example, such sentiments may well explain why two of the attacks directed against the security forces were executed between midnight and 03:45, in a possible attempt to minimise or even avoid civilian casualties.

With respect to the increase in the number of attacks and resultant casualties after the 2009 decrease, one possible explanation for this, particularly in relation to the north of Algeria, is that the instability that existed in neighbouring Libya, and the subsequent increased availability of and easier access to armaments, facilitated obtaining and transporting the explosives needed to construct improvised explosive devices.

Multiple attacks

Two of AQLIM's six attacks carried out in Algeria during 2007 are illustrative of the tactic of multiple attacks, where a number of attacks occur in different parts of the same city. As previously explained, the aim of multiple attacks is to cause maximum confusion and to capitalise on a state's inability to deal effectively with emerging threats such as suicide operations.

The first attacks occurred on 11 April 2007, when two attackers targeted the Algerian Prime Minister's office and a police station in Bab Ezzouar. The second attacks occurred on 11 December 2007 when two suicide bombers simultaneously targeted the front of the UN offices and the Constitutional Council headquarters in

Algiers. Choosing the 11th of the month unmistakably reflected AQLIM's association with al-Qa'eda – a reference to al-Qa'eda's attacks on 11 September 2001 in the US, as well as the Madrid train bombings on 11 March 2004. On 11 September 1990 President George Bush in a speech to the US Congress referred to the concept 'new world order'. The 11th also held symbolic importance to extremists in the region, in that the 11th century personified the height of the western Islamic empire.¹¹⁶ Even before the name change Droukdel referred to Algerians as 'the grandsons of Tariq ibn Ziyad' (also the name of an AQLIM battalion in the south) and 'sons of Yusuf ibn Tashfin ...'. AQLIM leadership regularly refers to the glorious era of Andalusia. During the period between January 2007 and January 2009, reference was made ten times to Yusuf bin Tashfin, Tariq bin Ziyad and 'Uqba bin Nafi.¹¹⁷ Reference to these historical heroes serves a number of objectives; most notably justifying their campaign and stirring up sentiments of a glorious past, in an attempt to enhance support and assistance. In explaining the former, Abu Ubayda Yusuf, AQLIM Shari'a committee member, in an audio statement on 6 October 2008 called for the liberation of areas under the historical control of the caliphate:

I end my message by saluting the steadfast mujahidin in the lands of the Islamic Maghreb, you the grandsons of Uqba, the conqueror of the Maghreb, and Musa Bin Nasir, the conqueror of Andalusia, and Tariq Ibn Ziyad, the vanquisher of the Romans and the Spanish, and [Yusuf] Tashfin, the hero of Zalaqa, and Abd al-Hamid Bin Badis, the leader of the reforms. Today you are the pride of the umma in a time of exploitation; you are the hope in reclaiming its usurped honour in our broken Islamic Maghreb and the appropriated Andalusia, Cordoba, Sicily, and Zalaqa. We will not rest and we will not be content until we regain every inch of our usurped land including the occupied Sebta and Melilla, and let us meet with our beloved people in the land of Palestine.¹¹⁸

An example of the latter can be found in Droukdel's audio statement on 21 September 2008:

Grandsons of Uqbah and Tariq and Yusuf bin Tashfin and Al-Mu'iz Bin Badis and `Abd al-Karim al-Khattabi and `Umar al-Mukhtar, rise from your inertia and put your hands in the hands of your brothers, the mujahidin, in the Al-Qaeda Organization in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb who have sacrificed their money, their lives, and their honour for the sake of protecting Islam and the

unity and the reverence of the Islamic Maghreb. Gather around the jihad with which Islam started so it becomes the only force and alternative to the regimes of apostasy that are ruling our countries.¹¹⁹

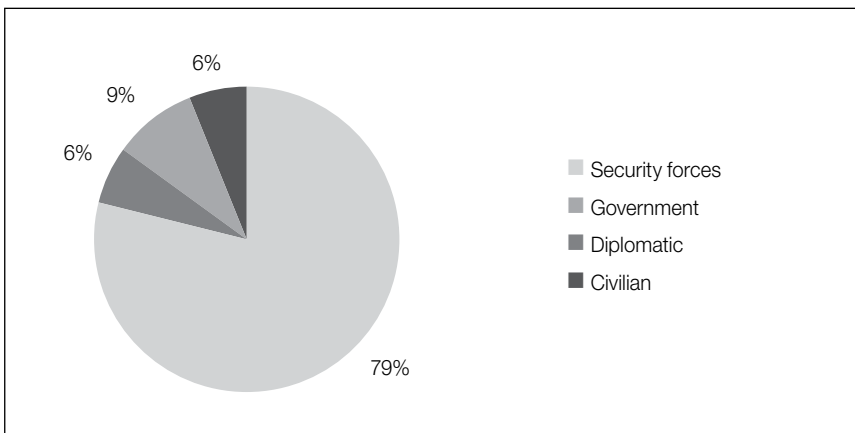
The 11th also has a negative connotation in Islamic history. For example, on 11 March 1917, the British Army under Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Stanley Maude defeated Ottoman troops in Baghdad.¹²⁰ During the same year, on 11 December 1917, British General Edmund Allenby after the Battle for Gaza (leading to the Christian occupation of Jerusalem) officially entered Jerusalem. For many jihadists this act was an extension of the Crusades.¹²¹ Although AQLIM did not specifically refer to this 'coincidence', exactly ninety years later on 11 December 2007 AQLIM targeted the Algerian Constitutional Council and a UN building in a twin suicide attack.

In addition to the above examples where multiple targets were hit almost simultaneously, multiple attacks also include examples where the same target was targeted over a short period of time. During 2011, two attacks on 16 July and 26 August involved a secondary suicide attacker on a motorcycle. While multiple targets add to confusion, secondary attacks are directed at first responders.

Analysis of attacks

Target selection

Figure 5 Target selection: AQLIM



Security forces

The majority of suicide attacks were directed against Algerian governmental officials, most notably the security forces (i.e. military and police), although other governmental and diplomatic entities were also targets. In its first suicide attack on 11 April 2007, AQLIM simultaneously targeted the Algerian Government Palace (a government target) and the police station (security forces) in Bab Ezzouar.¹²² The next attack perpetrated on 29 January 2008 was against a police station in Thenia, 60 km east of Algiers. In terms of identifying an underlying motivation for the selection of these targets, when AQLIM claimed responsibility for them it said that any attempts by ‘apostates’ – an apparent reference to the Algerian government – and their ‘crusader masters’ (possibly referring to France) to stop such ‘blessed operations’ would be futile.¹²³ As such, the attacks appear to be motivated, at least in part, by ideological causes.

Although the suicide attacks were predominately directed against members of the security forces, it was nevertheless civilians who bore the brunt of most of the ensuing casualties. For example, the attack on 19 August 2008 against the police academy in Boumerdes was probably the most counterproductive one for AQLIM. Despite the fact that the attack was directed at the police, 42 of the 43 people killed, and 32 of the 45 injured, were civilians. Most of these civilians were either new applicants to the police academy or their relatives.¹²⁴ Certainly, the resort to suicide operations as an indiscriminate tactic leading to the killing of civilians resulted in public outrage against AQLIM.

In parallel with attacks against the Algerian security forces, AQLIM began to extend its reach to neighbouring countries, where it similarly began to target members of the security forces. In addition to the more frequent conventional attacks, AQLIM started to combine these with suicide operations. For example, a suicide bomber – as part of a bigger operation – targeted a military compound in western Niger on 8 March 2010, killing five soldiers. In a message posted by the Al-Fajr Media Center, AQLIM claimed responsibility and dubbed the attack the ‘invasion of Sa’ad Abu Sariya’, naming it after a militant who was killed two months earlier by the Niger army. AQLIM further clarified its objectives in a media statement when it said: ‘Even though we confine our war to targeting the Crusader alliance and its interests in the region, and do not desire (to) antagonize the army of Niger against us, at the same time, we will not stand idle before any attack on the mujahedeen under the cover of “war on terror”.’¹²⁵

Suicide attacks in Niger and Mauritania and the growing influence of AQLIM in the region only added to existing concerns of security agencies.

Government

As previously mentioned, AQLIM's first suicide attack on the continent, on 11 April 2007, involved the direct and deliberate targeting of the Prime Minister's office in Algiers. Similarly, the subsequent attack on the Constitutional Court on 11 December 2007 was symbolic and effectively a governmental target because the Court was overseeing elections at the time. Indeed, targeting the Constitutional Court spoke to the alleged illegitimacy of the Algerian government.¹²⁶

Diplomatic targets

Although AQLIM previously referred to the illegitimacy of various governments in neighbouring Algeria, attacks during the period under review were directed not only at the security forces in these countries, but also against diplomatic – especially French and UN – interests in the region. Diplomatic targets refer to diplomatic missions and the offices of inter-governmental organisations.

The first of these attacks occurred on 11 December 2007. While one suicide attack was directed against the Algerian Constitutional Council, another was executed against the UN building housing the UN Development Programme (UNDP).¹²⁷ The suicide attack in front of the UN offices, committed by Rabbah Bechla (alias Ibrahim Abu Othman, aged 64) was symbolic. In terms of an explanation for these attacks, bin Laden's broadcast on Al-Jazeera on Saturday 3 November 2007 was revealing. In it he described the UN as being an 'enemy' of Muslims due to its double standards and ineffectiveness:

This was followed by a war of genocide in Bosnia in sight and hearing of the entire world in the heart of Europe. For several years our brothers have been killed, our women have been raped, and our children have been massacred in the safe havens of the United Nations and with its knowledge and cooperation. Those who refer our tragedies today to the United Nations so that they can be resolved are hypocrites who deceive God, His Prophet and the believers ... Are not our tragedies but caused by the United Nations? Who issued the Partition Resolution on Palestine in 1947 and surrendered the land of Muslims to the Jews? It was the United Nations in its resolution in 1947. ... Those who refer things to the international legitimacy have disavowed the legitimacy of the

Holy Book and the tradition of Prophet Muhammad, God's peace and blessings be upon him. This is the United Nations from which we have suffered greatly. Under no circumstances should any Muslim or sane person resort to the United Nations. The United Nations is nothing but a tool of crime ... [W]e should view events not as separate links, but as links in a long series of conspiracies, a war of annihilation in the true sense of the word. In Somalia, on the excuse of restoring hope, 13 000 of our brothers were killed. In southern Sudan, hundreds of thousands were killed ...¹²⁸

With respect to those suicide attacks committed against French embassies in neighbouring Mali and Mauritania, the following details are known:

- On 8 August 2009, three people, two of whom were French paramilitary gendarmes, were slightly injured in a suicide attack near the French embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, that only killed the suicide bomber. AQLIM named the bomber as Abu Obeida Musa al-Basri and said that he had failed to detonate his device inside the embassy because a barrier had prevented him from entering. In terms of motivating factors behind the attack, according to an AQLIM communiqué, it was in response to the 'aggression of the Crusaders, particularly France, and Mauritanian leaders against Islam and Muslims'.¹²⁹
- On 5 January 2011, two Mali nationals were injured when Bashir Simun, a 24-year-old Tunisian, exploded a gas cylinder at the French embassy in Bamako, Mali.¹³⁰

France is considered a historically justified target because of Algeria's violent war of liberation against France in order to gain its independence during the 1960s, which resulted in approximately one million deaths. Subsequent French interests and relations in the region are met with discouragement and even provide additional justification to extremists to target individuals and interests associated with France.

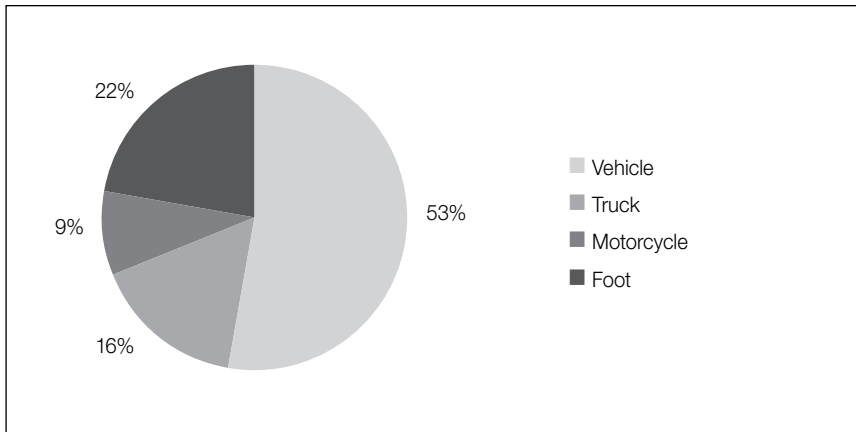
Commercial targets

Not all attacks were against government targets; some were also directed at government-controlled business interests. The most significant attack of this nature occurred in Algeria on 20 August 2008, when a suicide bomber targeted a bus transporting SNC-Lavalin (a Canadian company) employees near the Sophie Hotel. A second attack was executed near the military headquarters in Bouira.¹³¹ A

possible explanation for the attack against SNC-Lavalin may be a more general link to increased calls to attack Canadian representatives in Afghanistan. In particular, the Taliban issued a warning to Canada on 17 August 2008 that if it failed to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan, insurgents would continue to target Canadians in the country. Although AQLIM claimed that the attack took three months to plan and execute, it is nevertheless possible that it carried out this attack for these reasons, among others, thereby mirroring the actions of the Taliban and Al-Qa'eda in Afghanistan against inter alia Canadian entities as an ally of the US.¹³²

Delivery method

Figure 6 Delivery method: AQLIM



Trucks and vehicles

Most of the suicide attacks (in particular during 2007 and 2008) executed by AQLIM used cars or trucks (69 per cent). As previously noted, this permitted the attackers to carry large quantities of explosives, with the likelihood of creating higher numbers of casualties and more significant structural damage than might otherwise have been possible. For example, on 11 July 2007, ten soldiers were killed and 30 wounded after an attacker tried to drive a truck carrying a bomb into a military barracks. According to AQLIM, when it subsequently claimed responsibility for the attack, the refrigerated truck used in the attack was carrying about one tonne of explosives.¹³³

That said, other suicide attacks involving vehicles, but carrying fewer explosives, have also been successful. For example, in the attack on 21 September 2007 directed against a convoy of construction workers near Maala, a Mazda car, loaded with 250 kg of explosives, detonated upon impact with the convoy. One Italian and two French nationals, their Algerian driver, and five gendarmes were injured in the attack.¹³⁴ In another attack on 9 August 2008, a vehicle carrying between 200 and 300 kg of explosives was used against the Coast Guard barracks at Zemmouri el-Bahri, resulting in the death of eight people and injuring 19 others.¹³⁵

In another example, on 2 January 2008, a large car packed with explosives sped towards an Algerian police station in Naciria, approximately 70 km east of Algiers. The ensuing explosion killed at least four police officers and injured 20 other people, including eight police officers.¹³⁶ This attack occurred despite the security forces having been on maximum alert since earlier that week, after three trucks were reported stolen in the Algiers region. The vehicles included a tanker used to transport fuel,¹³⁷ which was particularly concerning because of its ability to cause very extensive damage due to the explosive nature and volume of its cargo.

It is a common tactic to use stolen vehicles in suicide bombings, not least in order to obscure the forensic trail of those responsible for the attacks: in most countries, car details are registered to the vehicle's owner, and vehicle rental agencies require identity documents when renting out their vehicles, either of which might reveal the identities of those involved or those connected to them.

Motorcycle

AQLIM has also used motorcycles as a method of delivery. One example is the attack of 23 July 2008, when a suicide bomber on a motorcycle detonated his device, killing himself and injuring 13 Algerian soldiers, in Lakhdaria, 70 km east of Algiers. The attacker slammed his explosives-laden motorbike into a military vehicle at high speed shortly after it had left its barracks to begin patrolling an area in Lakhdaria. The bomber was subsequently identified by security sources as a 'new recruit'. This was the second suicide bombing to have targeted the same army barracks.¹³⁸

More recently, during 2011, motorcycles were used in two secondary attacks targeting first responders. The first was on 16 July, when a second suicide bomber on a motorcycle detonated his device shortly after the first suicide

bomber in a vehicle had detonated his device outside of a police station in Bordj Menaiel. Similarly, on 26 August, the first suicide bomber who was on foot had targeted the mess hall of the military academy in ChercHELL. According to an AQLIM media statement, the second suicide bomber on a motorcycle then targeted those fleeing the first attack and attending to the injured two minutes after the initial attack.¹³⁹

The use of motorcycles places an additional strain on security officials seeking to prevent these types of attacks. For example, given that stolen and second-hand vehicles are predominately used in suicide attacks, the ability to identify and intercept them is to a large extent dependent on the relevant security personnel receiving immediate reports of any stolen vehicles. Even then, not all motorcycles or other vehicles will have been stolen for terrorist purposes, thereby making the identification of any stolen vehicles for the purpose of suicide operations or other illicit purposes even harder, not least with limited security service resources.

On foot

Most of the attacks executed by AQLIM that involved the bomber on foot resulted in limited casualties, with the exception of the almost simultaneous attack on the military academy in ChercHELL on 26 August 2011. During this attack the first suicide bomber on foot managed to reach the outside of the mess hall, which was reasonably full because the Ramadan fast on a Friday evening had just been broken. According to an AQLIM media statement, the bomber first detonated a hand grenade before he detonated himself. Minutes later a second suicide bomber on a motorcycle targeted first responders. This attack resulted in 18 fatalities and injured more than 20 people.¹⁴⁰

Another relatively successful attack on foot was executed on 6 September 2007 when a lone bomber detonated his device in a crowd waiting for the arrival of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika in front of the Al-Atik mosque in Batna. Although the attack resulted in 20 fatalities and more than 100 injuries, speculation on the timing of the attack was a relevant factor here: an estimated 45 minutes before the scheduled arrival of Bouteflika the attacker drew the attention of bystanders, who subsequently reported the individual's strange behaviour to members of the security forces.¹⁴¹ It is therefore possible that the attacker detonated his device prematurely as security forces approached him, even though the intended target was probably Bouteflika himself.

Vulnerability to early detection is an inherent weakness of this tactic. Consequently, other attackers have similarly detonated their devices early in an attempt to avoid arrest and perhaps also create some damage, though in most cases these have resulted in the death of only the attacker. The following examples drawn from incidents in Algeria, Mali and Mauritania further illustrate this:

- On 4 June 2008, a suicide bomber detonated his device near the police barracks in Bordj El Kiffan after he realised that he would be unable to reach the doors to the barracks after detection by the security forces. This incident resulted in the death of only the attacker.¹⁴²
- On 8 August 2009, three people, including two French paramilitary gendarmes, were injured in a suicide attack near the French embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania. Only the suicide bomber was among the fatalities. According to an AQLIM statement, the bomber, who was identified as Abu Obeida Musa al-Basri, failed to detonate his device inside the embassy because a barrier prevented him from entering it.¹⁴³
- On 5 January 2011, two Mali nationals were injured when Bashir Simun, a Tunisian national, exploded a gas cylinder near the French embassy in Bamako, Mali. Simun was not killed in the attack and was immediately arrested.¹⁴⁴
- On 5 February 2011, an AQLIM militant, surrounded by security forces, blew himself up in the Dar El Barka area of Mauritania's Brakna region, killing only himself.¹⁴⁵
- On 26 July 2011, a suicide bomber detonated his device to avoid arrest in Bouhamza. After buying large quantities of food, the bomber, who was wearing an explosives belt, was surrounded by security personnel as he left the store. He then detonated the explosives, killing only himself.¹⁴⁶

Despite one of the primary advantages of suicide operations conducted on foot, namely to gain better access to the intended target, the inherent weaknesses of this tactic are nevertheless also evident, not least in the potential for the attacker's demeanour to reveal his true intentions prematurely, with potentially significant consequences for the ultimate success of the operation.

Notable characteristics

Profile of the attackers

Age and recruitment of suicide bombers

The 15-year-old Nabil Belkacemi (alias Abu Musaab al-Zarqawi), one of the attackers responsible for the suicide operation conducted on 8 September 2007, became the youngest suicide bomber in Algeria at that time. In contrast, the oldest attacker identified was Rabbah Bechla (alias Ibrahim Abu Othman, aged 64) who had attacked the UN building on 11 December 2007. In stark contrast to Belkacemi, who as a young man still had his life ahead of him, Bechla – who had previously been associated with the *Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS) or Islamic Salvation Front, also known as *al-Jabhah al-Islamiyah lil-Inqadh* in Arabic – was in the advanced stages of cancer, so with little if anything to lose through dying in this way.¹⁴⁷ Despite these two relative extremes in terms of ages, from the data publicly available the majority of suicide attackers were between 20 and 30 years of age.

With respect to the background of individual bombers (where available), two trends were identified:

- A number of the suicide bombers had previous criminal records, often for narcotics-related offences. For example, Merouane Boudina, one of the bombers in the 11 April 2007 attack, was regularly in and out of prison for drug trafficking before he ‘disappeared’ a few months prior to the attack. Similarly, the other suicide bomber, Mouloud Benchiheb, was a multiple offender who had been recruited by the GSPC while serving a prison sentence for drug dealing.¹⁴⁸
- Some of the suicide bombers were recruited through religious institutions. It is important to note, however, that this trend refers to specific individuals abusing their position rather than to the utilisation and influences of broader institutions. For example, in the aftermath of the 8 September 2007 suicide attack carried out in Dellys, it became apparent that mosques in Bab El-Oued in Algiers had been infiltrated by extremist elements. Sheikh Amine, of the El Ouafa Bil Ahd mosque in Kouba, Algiers, was arrested after a number of young people, who had surrendered to the authorities, accused him of having tried to encourage them to join the ranks of GSPC/AQLIM and to participate in the insurgency in Iraq. Amine was also implicated as the person responsible for the radicalisation of Nabil Belkacemi and the other suicide bombers who participated in the Dellys attacks. According to family members – and even then

in retrospect – the radicalisation of Belkacemi had taken place over a period of five months. In addition to the Appreval mosque, the Ettahdhib mosque in Mostaganem was also implicated during the same period for having delivered extreme interpretations of Islam.¹⁴⁹ In addition to the radicalisation of young people, Amine was also suspected of involvement in the radicalisation of three of the four suicide bombers involved in the attacks on 11 April and July, including Merouane Boudina (alias Maad Benjabel), who was involved in the 11 April attacks. All three were from the Bachjdjarah and Bourouba neighbourhoods and had regularly attended the Appreval mosque.¹⁵⁰

Another trend that contributed to the initial success of the suicide operations was the fact that most of the bombers were previously unknown to security forces or else had had a support role within existing AQLIM structures. In both instances the security forces had not been alerted to their potential involvement in terrorist activities. These include:

- Mustapha Belabidi (alias Hamza Abu Abdelrahman, aged 27), who was responsible for the attack on 29 January 2008 against a police station in Thenia, was a new recruit from Boumerdes. According to family members, he had gone into hiding three months earlier and allegedly had provided support to AQLIM structures in Thenia.¹⁵¹
- Similar to Belabidi, a ‘new recruit’ executed the attack on 23 July 2008 in which soldiers were targeted in Lakhdaria.¹⁵² No further information is available.
- In another attack on 6 September 2007, the bomber, Belazrag el-Houari (alias Abu Al-Miqdad al-Wahrani, aged 28), ‘was part of a terrorist cell that used to operate in the western part of our country, but relocated to Batna due to intense pressure from the security forces about three years ago’.¹⁵³ Although it is unclear whether or not the authorities in Batna were aware of el-Houari’s earlier experiences with extremism, moving to a new area allowed el-Houari to re-establish himself and not to attract unwelcome attention from the security forces.
- Abou Djendel (aged 20), who was responsible for the attack on 1 September 2010 on a military convoy in Boumerdes, was a relatively new recruit having joined AQLIM only a few months prior to this suicide operation.¹⁵⁴
- Bashir Simun, a 24-year-old Tunisian national who exploded a gas cylinder at the French embassy on 5 January 2011 in Bamako, Mali, had previously spent

four months in AQLIM training camps in the Sahara where he had undergone ideological and military training before the attack.¹⁵⁵

Although most suicide bombers were relatively new to AQLIM, Larbi Charef (alias Abdel-Rahman Abu Abdel-Nasser al-Assimi, aged 32), who was involved in the attack on the Constitutional Council headquarters on 11 December 2007, had previously been arrested and prosecuted in 2004 for being part of a logistical support network linked to the GSPC. Benefiting from the reconciliation process, Charef had been released from prison in 2006, whereupon he undertook his suicide bombing training.¹⁵⁶

Significantly, after the attack of 6 September 2007 in Batna carried out by Belazrag el-Houari, renewed focus was placed on the success of the Algerian government's reconciliation efforts. The last phase of reconciliation efforts between the Algerian government and Islamist fighters was initiated on 29 September 2005 when the Algerian government proposed a 'Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation' in a referendum to the Algerian people. The 2005 charter was not the first attempt on the part of the government to resolve the conflict. Through the introduction of a reconciliation plan in 1995, President Liamine Zeroual initiated the *Rahma*, or clemency law, directed at the AIS. Under this initiative, approximately 2 000 fighters, predominantly from the Mitidja region, laid down their firearms. In the same spirit, Bouteflika initiated the Civil Concord in 1999. This resulted in clemency for approximately 6 000 terrorists. In the same way as the latest 2005 charter, the 1999 concord was directed at Islamist fighters who had not committed violent crimes such as murder and rape. However, practically all reformed Islamists benefited from the clemency measures, regardless of any crime they had committed.¹⁵⁷ Placing a question mark on the success of this strategy, on 20 September 2007 a repentant known as Z Walid was arrested in Batna. According to available information, it would appear that Walid had coordinated and assisted in the execution of the attack earlier that month by helping Haouari Belzrag, the suicide bomber, to reach the city centre through the forests near Tazoult City in order to remain undetected.¹⁵⁸ Walid had also previously recruited four youths from Kchida and six others from Park Afourage to join the insurgency in Iraq through the GSPC/AQLIM.¹⁵⁹ Additionally, according to the Algerian government on 7 October 2007, of the 6 000 former combatants who had made use of the reconciliation processes, some 20 had taken up arms again – a figure that was questioned at that time.¹⁶⁰

In terms of better comprehending the profile of the suicide attackers, it is also important to note that not all of the suicide bombers were new recruits, such as Idriss Ould Yarba, who carried out the attack on 25 August 2010. Yarba was a seasoned fighter involved in earlier attacks on Algerian security personnel in Lehjeira, as well as later skirmishes with the northern Tuaregs in Mali.¹⁶¹

Economic and social status

Unfortunately only limited information is available regarding the personal backgrounds of many of the suicide attackers considered here. What is known, in terms of identifiable trends, is that most of the perpetrators came from poor socio-economic backgrounds, such as Merouane Boudina (aged 23). He was one of the bombers involved in the attacks on 11 April 2007 and was one of ten brothers and sisters from a poor Algiers suburb.¹⁶²

Involvement of nationals/non-nationals

Although the majority of AQLIM suicide bombers initially were Algerian nationals, the organisation began to attract and recruit other nationalities as its reach began to spread. The first example of AQLIM using a foreign national here was in the attack of 20 August 2008 when Abdul Rahman Abu Zeinab al-Mauritani (originally from Mauritania) targeted a bus transporting SNC-Lavalin employees outside their hotel in Bouira, Algeria.¹⁶³ The ability of AQLIM to recruit a Mauritanian national was an early indication of AQLIM's success in marketing itself as a significant regional player, including as the regional representative of al-Qa'eda.

Similarly, on 25 August 2010 in Nema, Mauritania, a suicide bomber, later identified as Idriss Ould Yarba, attempted to force himself through the gate of an army barracks. This attack, together with the earlier one on 20 August 2008, suggests that after Algerian nationals, Mauritanian citizens are the most represented as foreign nationals within AQLIM. Another example is Bashir Simun, a 24-year-old Tunisian national, who was responsible for the attack on 5 February 2011. He had previously spent four months in AQLIM training camps in the Sahara where he had undergone ideological and military training. Despite this initial exposure, Simun had grown frustrated with AQLIM and had left for Senegal to sell mobile phones. Motivated by the need to prove himself to his former colleagues, however, Simun had then gone to Mali where he had attempted to execute this suicide attack. Although this particular attack was unsuccessful, another feature of more general relevance relating to AQLIM activities and attacks may be

identified: the threat does not necessarily originate directly from any organised terrorist network, but rather attackers – such as Simun – may be individually motivated (in this case by a deep-seated hatred for France) and assisted by a small support base.¹⁶⁴

SOMALIA

Creation of al-Shabaab and its adoption of suicide operations as a tactic

The creation of al-Shabaab Al-Mujahidin, or ‘The Youth’, can be traced back to *al-Ittihād al-islāmiyya* and *Ittihād al-mahākim al-islāmiyya*, commonly known as the Islamic Courts Union (ICU). The ICU has its origins in a coalition made in 2006 between local Sharia courts and Islamists in Mogadishu, which defeated the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism (ARPCT). It is important to note that the ARPCT was supported by the US to counter the activities of the ICU.¹⁶⁵ The ICU has both moderate and extremist elements, with the latter component including al-Shabaab. Headed by Aden Hashi Farah Ayro during the period under examination here, al-Shabaab was already the best armed, the best trained (often in Afghanistan), and perhaps the most committed of the different militant factions,¹⁶⁶ providing a level of stability and security not commonly known to Somalia. Even piracy ceased to pose a threat in the region, not least due to the fear among pirates of the much tougher sanctions for stealing available under Sharia law being imposed upon them.¹⁶⁷

When the ICU was defeated in February 2007 by Ethiopian forces assisted by the US, two principal factions emerged: the less militant members of the ICU, who went into exile in Eritrea and Djibouti where they formed the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia; and the more hardened and militant field commanders, who remained in Somalia and formed al-Shabaab and later Hizbul Islam.

Al-Qa’eda influence

In parallel with the events described in the previous section, al-Qa’eda exploited ongoing regional instabilities to strengthen its influence in Somalia, especially following Ethiopia’s intervention in Somalia in 2006, which resulted in the subsequent deployment of AU peacekeepers from Uganda and Burundi. As explained earlier, during bin Laden’s stay in Sudan between 1991 and 1996, he facilitated the

establishment of al-Qa'eda's East Africa cell, the one that had been responsible for the US embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es-Salaam in August 1998.

Of particular interest to the current discussion, the presence of extremists in Somalia and the involvement of foreigners from 2006 onwards in a conflict stretching back to 1991 (see the earlier section in this chapter on al-Qa'eda's influence in the region) provided the necessary justification for invoking jihad for the defence of Muslim territory against a 'Christian invasion'. In turn, these factors impacted upon terrorist activities in the region, not least the joining of forces against a common enemy.

Although the ICU, including its al-Shabaab element, declined formally to align itself with al-Qa'eda in 2006, its earlier allegiance with key members of al-Qa'eda and the involvement of foreigners in its operations were unmistakable. For example, in July 2006, Sheikh Yusuf Indha'adde, the former defence minister of the ICU, was featured in a video that showed 'Arab fighters preparing for a major battle on the northern outskirts of Mogadishu. Arabic anthems and poetry play[ed] on the audio track urging Muslims to join the global holy war to advance Islam and defeat its enemies'.¹⁶⁸

On 18 September 2006, as previously mentioned, the first suicide bombing in Somali history occurred, which targeted President Yusuf outside the Parliament building. The blast and a subsequent gun battle killed 11 people, including Yusuf's brother.¹⁶⁹ Within weeks, the ICU declared a jihad on Ethiopia due to its intervention in the Muslim territory of Somalia. Following this attack, the TFG lost a number of its high-ranking security officials and political leaders.

The deployment in 2006 of Ethiopian troops acting under the AU mantle – which was backed by the US, but which some regarded as an invasion of Somalia – prompted an outcry among the Somali diaspora worldwide. Within Somalia, a foreign enemy provided al-Shabaab with a new resolve. Under Sheikh Abu Mukhtar Robow (alias Abu Mansur), who served as a military commander and spokesperson for al-Shabaab, the group began to post propaganda videos on the internet. Through this platform, al-Shabaab managed to connect with hard-core Somalis within the diaspora, leading to their radicalisation and eventual recruitment for terrorist activities. In one weekly forum in September 2008, Robow stated that the establishment of the 'Islamic Emirate of Somalia' was 'imminent'.¹⁷⁰

Despite the withdrawal of Ethiopian forces from Somalia in January 2009, al-Shabaab continued aggressively to recruit foreign fighters through its internet-driven propaganda network. Then, in response to the subsequent deployment

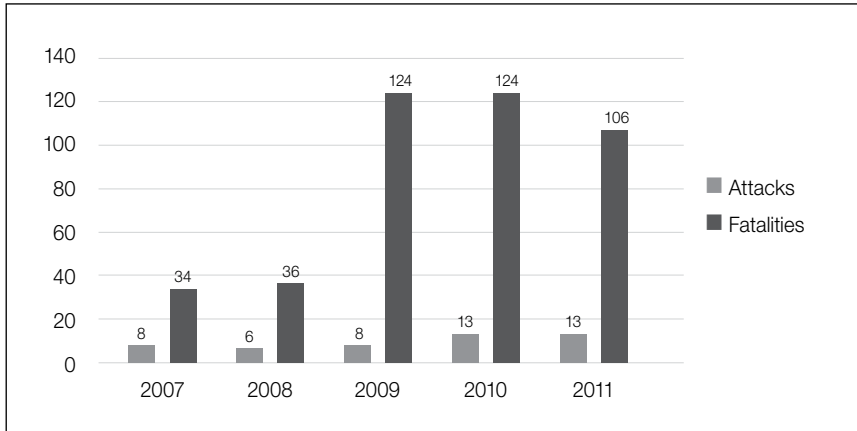
of AU peacekeepers from Uganda and Burundi, al-Qa'eda used this platform to enhance its influence in Somalia and beyond. With Ethiopia leading the initial campaign to stop the spread of the ICU in Somalia, followed by Uganda and Burundi, extremists used this external interference to their advantage in presenting it as a Christian invasion of a Muslim country. It was this sentiment that attracted members of the Somali expatriate communities to return to Somalia to fight for the 'liberation' of their former homeland. Among them was Shirwa Ahmed, originally from Minneapolis in the US, who was one of the suicide attackers that executed attacks in Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland (the self-declared autonomous region in the north-west of Somalia) on 28 October 2008. Attackers targeted the presidential palace, the UNDP compound, and the Ethiopian embassy. Almost simultaneously, two additional suicide bombers attacked the intelligence services in Bossaso, Puntland. At least 20 people were killed, and more than 30 others injured, during these attacks.

Additionally, because of Somalia's close proximity to Yemen, the threat of closer ties with al-Qa'eda through al-Qa'eda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) only increased. This possibility grew as the result of growing pressure al-Qa'eda faced in Afghanistan and Iraq. Following the death of Saleh Al-Nabhan in a US strike off Baraawe, al-Shabaab expressed its growing allegiance with al-Qa'eda in a video. In this video, which was distributed in September 2009, national emir Moktar Abu Zubair (alias Muktar Abdirahman 'Godane' or Ahmad Abdi Godane) for the first time declared the organisation's loyalty to bin Laden. The video featured among other things a large crowd waving guns and chanting: 'Here we are Osama! We are your soldiers Osama!' as well as audio clips from a previous bin Laden video that encouraged followers to 'Fight on O' Champions of Somalia',¹⁷¹

Significantly, in February 2010 Hassan Abdullah Hersi al-Turki (commander of the Kamboni militia and a previous commander in the ICU) and Ahmad Abdi Godane (from al-Shabaab) issued the following statement: 'We have agreed to join the international jihad of al-Qa'eda ... We have also agreed to unite al-Shabaab and Kamboni mujahideen to liberate the Eastern and Horn of Africa community who are under the feet of minority Christians.'¹⁷² Following this declaration, al-Shabaab, under the direction of Godane, executed the twin suicide attacks on 11 July 2010 in Kampala. Despite its clear intent to execute attacks beyond Somalia, all of its attacks (with the exception of the Kampala bombings) appear to have occurred within Somalia.

Ratio of suicide attacks to fatalities

Figure 7 Al-Shabaab attacks and fatalities since 2007



It is immediately apparent from the statistics in Figure 7 that there was a sudden and dramatic increase in the number of fatalities caused by al-Shabaab's attacks during 2009 and 2010 in particular, although these remained significant in 2011 as well. With the exception of the two attacks in Kampala, Uganda during 2010, all of the others were executed in Somalia. The increased level of success of al-Shabaab's suicide operations since 2009 may be attributable to a number of factors, not least its ability to infiltrate successfully its intended targets and to detonate their devices at the 'right' moment. One key tactic that facilitated this was the employment of disguises, which permitted the suicide bombers to blend in with their surrounding or otherwise not arouse suspicion and detection. For example:

- Wearing military uniforms (24 August 2010, 9 and 20 September 2010)
- Using stolen UN vehicles (17 September 2009)
- Being disguised as a woman (3 December 2009)
- Appearing as spectators (11 July 2010)

That said, the use of disguises was not always successful, with a number of the attackers still being detected and intercepted early, thereby preventing them

from reaching their intended targets. This was attributable, at least in part, to the increased vigilance and expertise of security personnel to identify and intercept potential suicide operations.

Multiple attacks

As with AQLIM, al-Shabaab often favours the use of multiple attacks in order to maximise the casualties and damage caused. In addition to the two, almost simultaneous, attacks carried out on 11 July 2010 in Kampala, Uganda, the tactic has also been used in Somalia. Different scenarios have included:

- On 15 February 2010, two suicide car bombs, together with a wheelbarrow laden with explosives, targeted the convoy of Yusuf Mohamed Indha'adde, the defence minister (who survived the attack). In the first attack, the suicide bomber followed the minister's vehicle, but his vehicle exploded before colliding with the targeted one, injuring two bodyguards in a car driving behind the minister's vehicle. As the convoy stopped to collect the wounded personnel, a second vehicle and then the wheelbarrow packed with explosives detonated nearby.¹⁷³ Clearly, the tactic of multiple attacks was used in this operation in order to increase the likelihood of successfully assassinating the defence minister, although ultimately it was unsuccessful.
- On 9 September 2010, two vehicles laden with explosives targeted the gates of the Aden International Airport. According to AU peacekeepers, two suicide bombers, who were dressed in TFG military uniforms and were in the first vehicle, blew themselves up at the gate leading to the airport terminal. The remaining five attackers, wearing suicide vests, then exited from the second vehicle and started firing at the peacekeepers.¹⁷⁴ Although the official casualty rate was not released, according to eyewitness accounts at least nine people died.¹⁷⁵ This attack serves as an example where multiple attackers were used to gain access to the intended target. Multiple attackers against one target are particularly called for in cases where the intended target is protected. In other words, more layers of protection will require another set of attackers. In addition to the use of multiple attackers, those planning the attack also considered using TFG military uniforms as a disguise.
- On 15 June 2007 in Mogadishu, Somalia, a series of three coordinated bombings targeted different parts of Mogadishu between 13:00 and 14:00. In one of these attacks, a suicide bomber on a motorcycle targeted government soldiers

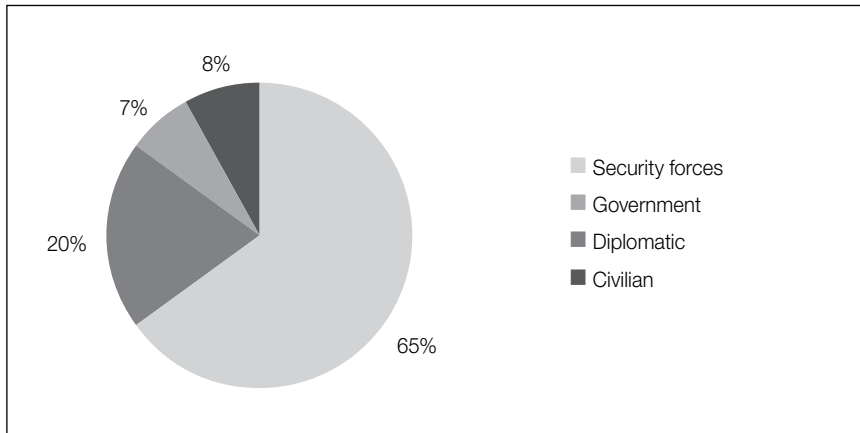
guarding Mohamed Osman Dhagahtur, the deputy mayor. The attacks left eight people dead and more than ten injured.¹⁷⁶

- On 29 October 2008, three simultaneous suicide attacks occurred within Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland. The attacks were directed at the presidential palace, a UNDP compound, and the Ethiopian mission.¹⁷⁷ Two additional suicide attacks, kilometres apart, in Bossasso, Puntland, against the Interior Ministry offices responsible for combating terrorism, followed. The death toll in the above attacks was initially reported as 30 and more than 50 people injured.¹⁷⁸

Analysis of attacks

Target selection

Figure 8 Target selection – Al-Shabaab



Security forces

As is evident from Figure 8, most suicide attacks were directed against members of the security forces, in particular Ethiopian forces and AMISOM. In terms of a possible explanation for this, it is apparent that many extremists, including the ICU, regarded the TFG as being effectively a puppet government kept in power by foreign forces (initially by the Ethiopian forces, who were later replaced by AMISOM). These perceptions meant that such foreign influences were regarded

as being tantamount to a foreign occupation of Muslim territory by non-Muslim, 'infidel' forces, triggering a jihad against them for their withdrawal. In turn, this justified the employment of suicide operations in the minds of some as a legitimate instrument for the removal of such foreign troops and influences. The call bin Laden made on Muslims to support the ICU and to open a third front against the US in Somalia in June 2006 illustrates this.¹⁷⁹ Shortly after this call, Somalia witnessed the first suicide bombing in Somalia on 18 September 2006 that targeted President Yusuf, as discussed previously.

Attacks were also launched against military camps associated with the TFG, as representatives of the state. Although most were discriminate in nature in the sense that they specifically targeted soldiers, many civilians were caught up in either the original attacks or else, for example, in the indiscriminate crossfire that followed.

Government

As Figure 8 shows, a significant number of attacks (20 per cent) were also committed against governmental officials, which were of both a discriminate and indiscriminate nature, often also involving civilian casualties due to the public and busy locations in which the attacks occurred. Some examples of both features of these attacks are as follows:

- During the almost simultaneous attacks that occurred in Hargeisa in October 2008, one of the attacks was directed at the presidential palace that resulted in the death of the presidential secretary.¹⁸⁰
- The attack that led to the deaths of Omar Hashi Aden (the National Security Minister), Suleyman Olad Roble (the Minister for Sport) and Abdikarin Farah Laqanyo (a former ambassador of the TFG to Ethiopia) was executed at the Madina Hotel in Beledweyn in June 2009. In addition to the deaths of these three individuals, the overall death toll reached 25, with more than 50 others being injured.¹⁸¹
- On 3 December 2009, Qamar Aden Ali (the Somali Minister for Health), Professor Ibrahim Hassan Adow (the Minister for Higher Education) and Ahmed Abdullahi Wayeel (the Minister for Education) were among the 22 people killed in a suicide attack that targeted a graduation ceremony for 43 medical, engineering and computer science students of Benadir University in Mogadishu. The attack took

place in the busy Shamo Hotel just as the graduation ceremony was about to start.¹⁸²

- On 15 February 2010, Yusuf Mohamed Indha'adde (the Minister of Defence) survived a suicide attack that killed two bystanders. The attackers (in a vehicle) had followed the Minister's vehicle, but had collided with another vehicle before they could strike it.¹⁸³
- In another less successful attack, a vehicle-borne suicide bomber detonated his device on 18 October 2011 at the perimeter wall of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs building in Mogadishu. The building was recently renovated with assistance from Italy, but government officials had yet to begin using it. The attack resulted in the death of only four civilian bystanders.¹⁸⁴

Diplomatic

Among the more devastating suicide attacks executed were the three attacks on 29 October 2008 in Hargeisa, two of which were aimed at diplomatic targets: the UNDP's compound and the Ethiopian embassy (the third target was the presidential palace).

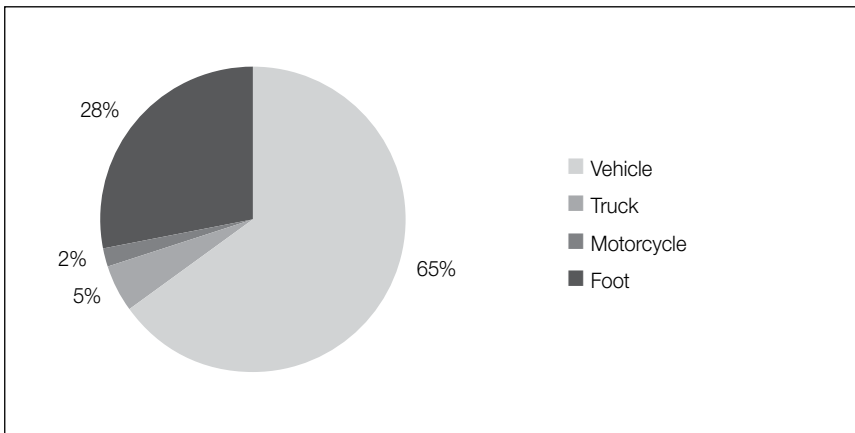
In terms of underlying motivations for such attacks, similar to those in Algeria, more generally the UNDP may have been considered by extremists to be a legitimate target due to the wider failings of the UN, not least in preventing the suffering of Muslims. Coupled with this, the then prevailing political dynamics in the region are likely to have further fuelled sentiments against the UN, especially UN Security Council Resolution 1844 (2008) and Security Council Resolution 1853 (2008) that referred to Eritrea as being directly and indirectly involved in providing assistance to al-Shabaab.¹⁸⁵

In addition and more specific to the UNDP, al-Shabaab, together with other extremists, had opposed the UNDP's humanitarian relief effort in the region – Operation Provide Relief (UNOSOM I) – since it began in August 1992.¹⁸⁶ Certainly, such pressure has continued even after the October 2008 attack against the UNDP compound. For example, in July 2009 al-Shabaab ordered the closure of the UNDP's offices, together with the UN Department of Security and Safety (UNDSS) and the UN Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS), each of which it accused of being engaged in activities 'hostile' to Islam. More recently, al-Shabaab raided UN offices in Baidoa and Wajid,¹⁸⁷ and on 9 June 2011 two suicide bombers attacked a UN World Food Programme (WFP) warehouse in Mogadishu, killing one nearby civilian in the process.¹⁸⁸

With respect to the attack on the Ethiopian embassy, tensions have existed between Ethiopia and Somalia for decades. For example, Somalia lost a bloody war, initiated by General Mohamed Siad Barre, over Ethiopia's Somali-populated Ogaden region in 1977-78 in an unsuccessful attempt to create a Greater Somalia.¹⁸⁹ Consequently, suspicions have remained high between the two states.

Delivery method

Figure 9 Delivery method – Al-Shabaab



Vehicles

Similar to attacks executed by AQLIM, al-Shabaab utilised vehicles in most of its attacks. One tactic, which was particularly successful, was for the suicide bombers to use vehicles that were expected in order to avoid detection and to penetrate security measures. For example, on 23 February 2009 two suicide bombers gained access to an AMISOM camp in Mogadishu by using a vehicle that normally brought in supplies and so was familiar to AMISOM guards.¹⁹⁰ In another attack on 17 September 2009, two UN marked vehicles were used to gain access to the AMISOM headquarters in Somalia before being detonated. Among those who died was the AMISOM deputy commander, Major General Juvenal Niyonguruza, while the force

commander, Ugandan General Nathan Mugisha, was among the wounded.¹⁹¹ After the attack it became apparent that six more UN vehicles were unaccounted for.¹⁹²

Clearly these types of attacks raise particular challenges for the security forces, not least in terms of the need for constant vigilance, coupled with the effective and regular vetting of security personnel and employees of external service providers to prevent the infiltration of extremists in their midst.

Motorcycles

Only one attack in Somalia involved the use of motorcycles, when two attackers on 15 June 2007, as part of coordinated attacks, rammed their motorcycles into a truck of government soldiers who were guarding the residence of Mohamed Osman Dhagahtur, the deputy mayor. Five people, including the bombers, were killed.¹⁹³

On foot

Suicide attackers on foot were also fairly frequently utilised (over one quarter of all attacks) and with devastating consequences during the period under review. This was in part attributable to the benefits of this method of delivery as explained previously in Chapter 2, including the ability to gain increased proximity to the target, and the physics involved in any explosion within close confines, which may increase the damage caused to both persons and property.

In Somalia, these and other factors meant that the attacks carried out on foot on 3 December 2009 at the graduation ceremony at the Shamo Hotel, and on 24 August 2010 at the Muna Hotel, had devastating consequences. In both operations, the attackers were disguised and so were able to get close to their targets: the bomber at the Shamo Hotel was disguised as a woman and was wearing the hijab, and therefore was not recognised by the security personnel as being a man. Certainly, due to particular sensitivities, women are less likely to be properly searched by security personnel, thereby reducing the likelihood of detection. In the case of the attack at the Muna hotel, the two suicide bombers were disguised as members of the government's security forces. One of the attackers was later identified as 16-year-old Aden Hussein, who used to be a bodyguard for Muktar Robow (alias Abu Mansur), a senior al-Shabaab leader.¹⁹⁴ In addition to the death and injury of civilians, the two attacks killed ten government ministers and injured a further five.

One other tactic that al-Shabaab sometimes employs, as an alternative to using disguises, to enable bombers operating on foot to gain close proximity to

their target is to engage in conventional distraction techniques – such as shooting or throwing a hand grenade – before the attackers detonate their suicide vests. For example, on 9 June 2011 one AMISOM soldier was killed and four others were wounded when two suicide bombers attacked a WFP warehouse in Mogadishu. The attackers first opened fire on a group of soldiers guarding the warehouse before detonating their suicide vests. Alternatively, suicide bombers may be used prior to a more conventional form of attack, as was the case when armed al-Shabaab fighters, who included two suicide bombers disguised as soldiers, attacked an AMISOM base near Mogadishu stadium. The two suicide bombers initiated the attack by detonating their devices. Other al-Shabaab militants then attempted to storm the base, resulting in at least three AMISOM soldiers being killed and three others wounded together with a number of al-Shabaab fighters.¹⁹⁵

Notable characteristics

Profile of suicide attackers

Similar to AQLIM, not much information is known regarding the profile of the individuals responsible for the suicide attacks carried out. One reason for this is that the availability of such details is often dependent upon what al-Shabaab reveals in its press statements, which is frequently limited to the name of the attacker(s). Sometime a few more details might be given where the attacker was not a local person. Further, other mechanisms of establishing an attacker's identity are usually unavailable, such as DNA tests, which are not commonplace on the continent; or a missing person's register, not least because factors such as displacement make it difficult, if not impossible, for family members to realise and report that one of their own may be missing. Therefore, only the background and recruitment trends of identified suicide attackers, often originally from outside Somalia, may be meaningfully analysed here.

Involvement of nationals/non-nationals

Al-Shabaab has enjoyed relative success in drawing back Somali diaspora, who often live in Western states, to their original homeland in support of its objectives. In particular, children that left Somalia with their parents are especially vulnerable to such recruitment by extremists, perhaps in a search for belonging when confronted by a culture not their own. Such trends further pose significant challenges to security services outside of Somalia, in particular due to the concern that

individuals radicalised there may subsequently perpetrate suicide operations or other terrorist activities elsewhere, as has been the case to date in, for example, Australia, Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden.

Some examples of non-national suicide bombers, including motivational factors where known, are as follows:

- In the three simultaneous suicide attacks that occurred on 29 October 2008 in Hargeisa (previously mentioned), one of the attackers, Shirwa Ahmed, was from the US. Similarly, Abdulfatah Abdullahi Gutale had a US green card and had previously lived in the US.^{196 197}
- On 24 January 2009, Ahmed Hussein Ahmed, a university student from London, became the first British suicide bomber involved in an attack in Somalia. Ahmed dropped out of a business studies course at Oxford Brookes University to travel to his country of origin in October 2007. The 21-year-old reportedly blew himself up at an AMISOM checkpoint. In terms of his underlying motivation, it would seem from his video statement that he had been influenced by extremist ideology: 'Oh my people, know that I am doing this martyrdom operation for the sake of Allah. I advise you to migrate to Somalia and wage war against your enemies. Death in honour is better than life in humiliation.'¹⁹⁸
- On 17 September 2009, Omar Mohamed Mahmoud, a Somali-American (who lived in the US until 2007) was identified as one of the suicide bombers responsible for an attack on AMISOM's headquarters in Mogadishu that resulted in the death of 21 people. Major General Juvenal Niyonguruza, AMISOM's deputy commander, was among those fatally injured.¹⁹⁹
- On 3 December 2009, in the attack on the graduation ceremony that resulted in the death of three TFG ministers, the attacker allegedly came from Denmark. The true identity of the attacker is, however, not clear because al-Shabaab denied any responsibility for the attack,²⁰⁰ although this may have been in an attempt to distance itself from an attack that had inflicted significant civilian casualties and resulted in public outrage.
- On 29 October 2011, two suicide bombers, disguised in military uniform, detonated their explosives near the entrance to an AU base in Mogadishu, injuring two soldiers. Sheikh Mohamed Ibrahim, an al-Shabaab spokesperson, announced: 'Two young and brave mujahideen warriors, one who came from the United States, led the holy attack that killed many enemies yesterday.' One of the suicide attackers was later identified as Abdisalan Hussein Ali (aged 22),

a Somali-American whose parents had taken him to the US as a young child where he had grown up. Before leaving for Somalia in 2008 to fight along al-Shabaab, Ali had had a bright professional future in front of him. Described in school as someone who was 'highly motivated' and who 'wanted to change lives', when and the reasons why he turned to Islamist extremism is unclear.²⁰¹

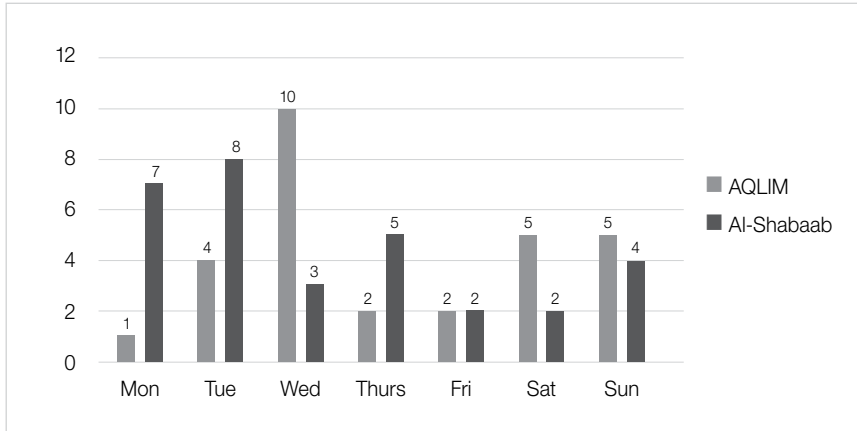
More detached from their countrymen, members of the Somali expatriate communities can be more 'willing' to cause extensive casualties than others recruited from within Somalia. Despite this generalisation, another very important element also needs to be taken into consideration regarding the broad psyche of most extremists: extremists value life differently. While fighting for a 'just cause', there are seldom, if ever, reference to the concept 'innocent'. Non-members are often 'punished' for not belonging to the same organisation or group, and even should supporters be killed in the process, they are referred to as 'martyrs' in a greater cause.

Al-Shabaab has also recruited foreign suicide bombers from neighbouring Kenya. One example is Othman Otayo, the attacker responsible for the suicide bombing on the Ethiopian military base in Mogadishu on 19 April 2007.²⁰² Although the identities of the two suicide bombers responsible for the 11 July 2010 attacks in Kampala, Uganda cannot be verified, from testimony later given by a suspect, it is believed that one of the bombers was originally from Kenya. Since then, Kenya has deployed military ground forces in October 2011 to Somalia in response to the kidnapping of Westerners along its north-eastern coastal borders. Although many supported this initiative, al-Shabaab made use of this opportunity to increase recruitment to its ranks within Kenya.²⁰³

OTHER DISCERNIBLE TRENDS AMONG AQLIM AND AL-SHABAAB

Timing of attacks

Some observations may be made regarding the timing of AQLIM and al-Shabaab attacks, which are illustrated in Figure 10. Simultaneous attacks are treated as one incident.

Figure 10 Day of the week

Analysis of the attacks reveals two trends that appear to be significant. The first is that many of them occurred during Ramadan, which is a period of particular religious significance to Muslims as they fast and seek increased spiritual purity. Perhaps this is why those seeking martyrdom and rewards in the ‘hereafter’ often select this period. More specifically, in Somalia and Algeria, AQLIM and al-Shabaab executed a combined total of six suicide attacks during Ramadan.

The other notable trend is that a number of attacks occurred on the 11th day of the month. This is significant because the 11th of the month is indicative of an organisation’s allegiance to al-Qa’eda (remembering especially the most spectacular and significant suicide attacks thus far, the 9/11 attacks in the US). In total, AQLIM executed five attacks on the 11th day of the month, which included its first three suicide attacks following the group’s name change to AQLIM. In comparison, al-Shabaab executed only two attacks on the 11th – the two almost simultaneous attacks on 11 July 2010 in Kampala, Uganda, which were also the only two attacks al-Shabaab executed outside of Somalia.

With regard to the above discussion, there is no further correlation between AQLIM and al-Shabaab, based on the day of the week attacks were executed.

NIGERIA

Creation of Boko Haram and its adoption of suicide operations as a tactic

The roots of Boko Haram can be traced back to a group called al-Sunna wal Jamma, otherwise known as the 'Followers of the Prophet', who gained recognition during an armed uprising in December 2003 in Yobe State in north-east Nigeria when it attacked the police stations in Kanamma and nearby Geidam, killing two policemen. The group then retreated to a primary school in Kanamma where it hoisted the flag of Afghanistan and became known as the 'Nigerian Taliban'.²⁰⁴

Analysis conducted following the incident revealed that the group had in fact operated in Nigeria for some time, and that it had a cell network of members that included highly educated people trained in the use of weapons. Residents in Kanamma also referred to 'strangers' who had set up camp on the outskirts of the small town near the Niger border at the end of 2002 and the beginning of 2003. These 'strangers' (referring to foreigners) then came into town to preach about how to attain Islamic purity. According to security officials, the group had an extensive network of cells that recruited members from afar, including Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state in north-eastern Nigeria; Lagos in the south-west; as well as foreign elements from neighbouring Niger. It is possible that the group may have received external support, including financial and logistical (such as weaponry), owing to its foreign connections.²⁰⁵

Information gathered during the post-attack investigations also deepened concerns previously voiced by security agencies regarding the activities of certain Islamic preachers whom they suspected of teaching extremist views to Muslims in parts of northern Nigeria. Many of these preachers were suspected of having links to terrorist groups and foreign organisations, suggesting a broader regional reach.²⁰⁶ These concerns were further strengthened when suspected members attacked a police patrol on 8 October 2004 near Kala-Balge, close to the north-eastern border with Cameroon. In reaction, Nigerian police, military, and civilian militias launched a counter-offensive, after which assailants fled into Niger and Cameroon.²⁰⁷

Al-Sunna wal Jamma especially targeted and attracted university students who sought the creation of a Taliban-style state. Although relatively small, this and other extremist groups tapped into a wider atmosphere of frustration and

feelings of neglect. At the centre of this were poor socio-economic conditions and political marginalisation. Additionally, al-Sunna wal Jamma sought to impose a doctrine of what it called a ‘purification of Islam’ on the communities where it had set up military-style training camps.

Further attacks carried out by Islamist militants in 2004 – against Nigerian police stations on 20 September 2004, killing five people; and against two local government headquarters in Borno state in September 2004, causing death and destruction – were most probably attributable to al Sunna wal Jamma.²⁰⁸

Since these earlier sporadic attacks, the group now known as Boko Haram received renewed attention since an attack in July 2009 when it set alight churches and governmental buildings in Bauchi and Yobe.²⁰⁹ In response to the government’s forceful reaction to these attacks, the group went underground until September 2010, when the Nigerian police began to suspect the group’s involvement in a number of attacks, which included a spate of shootings by gunmen on motorcycles in northern Nigeria; attacks on police stations; and a prison raid in Bauchi that freed more than 700 inmates (evidenced by the distribution of a video showing Islamists in the act of raiding and liberating the prison) who included an estimated 100 suspected Boko Haram members. The video also suggested some ideological motivation for the raid. In referring to itself as ‘People Committed to the Prophet’s Teachings for Propagation and Jihad’, a masked man holding an AK-47 rifle stated: ‘[W]e have been permitted by Allah to fight whoever kills us and destroys our homes. We will avenge the killings of our brethren and the destruction of our homes.’²¹⁰ This latter aspect introduced a new dimension to the earlier threat presented by the Nigerian Taliban and now Boko Haram: a closer alliance with transnational terrorism and al-Qa’eda that initially started with local frustrations, but became more extreme in its ideology and resolve, perhaps due to the heavy-handed government response to earlier attacks.

Relationship with GSPC/AQLIM

At a sub-regional level, the growing influence of GSPC/AQLIM became a concern in Nigeria as well. As early as April 2004, three Nigerian nationals were among the GSPC terrorists captured by Chadian soldiers during an exchange of fire between both forces, with many more Nigerian nationals killed by security officials in Chad.²¹¹ After the arrest of Mallam Mohammed Ashafa, the leader of the Nigerian Taliban, the Nigerian government revealed that GSPC training facilities existed in

Niger. According to Nigerian security personnel, Ashafa contacted, sponsored and assisted Isam Adam Sukur, Ahamed Taifi, Babagana Abdulkarim Galtamari and 18 other *mujahideen* fighters – members of the military arm of the Nigerian Taliban – to receive combat training in terrorism from a GSPC camp at Agwan, Niger. Ashafa also gave large sums of money to Isam Adam Sukur and Ahamed Taifi for them to receive this GSPC training in Niger. During the court proceedings that followed Ashafa's arrest it became evident that his network in Nigeria specialised in gathering information and carrying out terrorist attacks on the residences of US citizens living in Nigeria. Ashafa was further charged with 'receiving money from Talha and Na'deem (al-Qa'eda operatives) of the Tabliqh headquarters, Lahore, Pakistan, for recruiting and training terrorists, whose main objective was to attack residences of Americans living in Nigeria'.²¹²

In January 2007, a Nigerian court also heard that Mallam Bello Ilyas Damagum, allegedly a member of the Nigerian Taliban, had sent 14 young militants abroad to attend the Ummul Qurah Islamic training camp in Mauritania. Nura Umar, Abdul Aziz Hamza and Mohammed Ibrahim were among those who received training. Allegedly Damagum in 2002 also received US\$300 000 from al-Qa'eda operatives in Sudan. This was kept in a London bank and used for recruiting members.²¹³ Additionally, Mohammed Damagum, a director of a prominent newspaper in northern Nigeria, was also standing trial for allegedly funding the training of 17 Taliban fighters in Mauritania at a cost of US\$300 000.²¹⁴ In response to these disclosures, in October 2007 Nigerian security officers arrested Abubakar Haruna and Isah A in Kano, who had allegedly attended a training camp in Algeria. Incriminating documentation and firearms were found in their possession.²¹⁵ Subsequently, nine other suspects were arrested in Kano, Kaduna, and Yobe in November 2007. Nigerian security forces charged several suspects – including Omar Husseni, Abubakar Adamu Kamba, Awwalu Haruna and Dauda Abduamid – with receiving training in Algeria by GSPC/AQLIM until August 2007. The suspects were arrested for being in possession of firearms, ammunition and material to construct explosive devices.²¹⁶

GSPC/AQLIM's influences were not, however, confined to the provision of military training to the Nigerian Taliban, and also included the promotion of extremist ideology. This was apparent in an announcement made by Abdelmalek Droukdel (alias Abou Moussab Abdelwadoud), the leader of AQLIM, following the sectarian violence that occurred in Nigeria in 2009, namely that AQLIM would

supply the Nigerian Taliban with arms to ‘defend Muslims in Nigeria and stop the advance of a minority of Crusaders’.²¹⁷ More specifically, he stated:

Be confident that the blood of our brethren will not be shed with impunity, God willing, and that we will do our utmost to support you and take revenge on the malicious Crusaders. The only solution for you to recover your rights and your resources and the [only] lawful way which will preserve your religion, dignity and existence in the face of the senseless Crusade waged against you is to adopt a position of strength mainly by preparing yourselves for jihad for the cause of God.²¹⁸

Certainly, by June 2010 Mauritanian security officials believed that initial contacts had been made between AQLIM and Boko Haram. In a statement Droukdel was allegedly seeking to contact Boko Haram ‘to escape from the pressure of the Sahel’ while expanding their influence to the south.²¹⁹

Although the extent of AQLIM’s influence is a contentious topic, the suicide bombing on 16 June 2011 (see further details below) was without doubt a watershed. Additionally, although most of its activities are traditionally concentrated in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state, Boko Haram’s influence in Nigeria’s northern states is spreading and with this the concern that AQLIM is gradually achieving its objective of representing al-Qa’eda in the Maghreb and even beyond.

Relationship with al-Shabaab

In addition to its relationship with AQLIM to the north, it also seems that Boko Haram has connections with al-Shabaab in Somalia, both of which are concerning not least in terms of regional security. Boko Haram’s association with al-Shabaab is suggested by, for example, a statement following the 16 June 2011 attack, which said:

Very soon, we would wage Jihad on the enemies of God and his prophet. We want to make it known that our Jihadists have arrived in Nigeria from Somalia where they got serious training on warfare from our brethren who made the country ungovernable and forced the interim government to relocate to Kenya. We want to assure all security agencies that we would frustrate their efforts. By

the grace of God, despite the armored carriers that they are boasting of, they are no match with the training we acquired in Somalia.²²⁰

Summary of suicide attacks in Nigeria in 2011

16 June 2011

In its first suicide attack, executed on 16 June 2011, Boko Haram targeted the police headquarters in Abuja. Ultimately intended to assassinate Hafiz Ringim, the Inspector General of Police, this attack resulted in the death of at least ten people.²²¹ Although the attacker was not successful in terms of assassinating the Inspector General, one particularly concerning feature of this attack was the bomber's links with AQLIM and al-Shabaab, suggesting that Boko Haram was not operating in isolation.

Following the attack, security officials speculated on how the device was detonated, because the bomber did not detonate the device while he was closest to his intended target, and the explosion occurred while the vehicle being driven by the attacker was in motion. The most reasonable explanation is that the device was detonated remotely. Although some might suggest that an attack cannot be categorised as a suicide operation if the bomber did not detonate the device himself, there are a couple of possible explanations for a remote detonation.

The first is that the driver of the vehicle was tasked to drive to the intended target under false pretences; that is, that they did not know that it contained explosives or that it would be detonated with them inside. Such an occurrence is not uncommon among terrorist groups. For example, the Irish Republican Army in Northern Ireland was notorious for holding family members hostage and forcing a member of the family (often the father figure) to drive a vehicle to a particular destination, often not knowing that it was fitted with an explosive device that could be detonated either remotely or by a pre-set timer.

Another explanation is that the driver was recruited as a suicide attacker, but that those responsible for the attack detonated the device remotely in case the attacker was unable to go through with the attack. Referred to as a 'back-up', these types of attacks are common in countries not used to suicide operations, especially if those responsible for planning the attack are not the ones executing the attack.

Later on the same day, Abu Zaid, an alleged senior Boko Haram commander, claimed responsibility for the attack and stated that the attack's primary purpose was a show of arms and the group's operational capabilities to the state authorities. He also confirmed that the attack targeted the Inspector-General.²²² Any speculation as to whether this attack was in fact a suicide operation and whether this incident was the start of a new campaign of such terrorist activities, was addressed when another suicide bomber struck on 15 August, despite the fact that the attack was not entirely successful.

15 August 2011

A suicide bomber, estimated to be in his mid-twenties, attempted a suicide attack on the police command headquarters in Maiduguri. Speeding to the gates in a vehicle, he crashed into several police officials at the gate. Armed guards then opened fire, fatally wounding the driver, thereby causing him to lose control of his vehicle and crash into a tree right in front of the main building. At the time of the attack, approximately 1 500 police applicants were undergoing a screening exercise at the police training school adjacent to the police command headquarters. Had the attack been successful, there would have been a significant number of casualties.²²³

26 August 2011

A suicide bomber drove a Honda Accord packed with explosives into the UN building in Abuja, killing at least 23 people, while more than 80 were injured. The bomber drove his vehicle through two security barriers before he crashed into the reception area, thereby detonating the explosives. The blast brought down parts of the structure and blew out the windows of nearby buildings.²²⁴ According to FBI investigators who were called in to assist in the forensic investigations, a significant amount of explosives was being carried, and the device had a number of professional and deadly features that reflected the serious intent of the attack: '[T]he car was packed with 125 kg of manufactured explosives, including the plastic explosive pentaerythritol tetranitrate (PETN) and triacetone triperoxide (TATP) – both highly powerful and volatile, and more potent than easier-to-build fertilizer-based explosives. The explosives were used in a “shaped charge”, which increases damage from a blast. Investigators believe the bomb probably consisted of both stolen factory-made explosives and homemade materials.'²²⁵

Boko Haram named the bomber as Mohammed Abul Barra, a 27-year-old Nigerian national, who was originally from Maiduguri where the group had

carried out most of its earlier attacks.²²⁶ In terms of motivation for this attack, Abul Qaqa, Boko Haram's spokesperson, stated that they had targeted the UN building because 'the United Nations is the bastion of the global oppression of Muslims all over the world. We are at war against infidels. In Nigeria, the federal government tries to perpetuate the agenda of the United Nations.'²²⁷

4 November 2011

A suicide bomber targeted a military base in Maiduguri, detonating the explosive-laden vehicle outside the main entrance to the base, causing at least nine civilian fatalities and injuring a few soldiers. A second suicide bomber then detonated his device at an anti-terrorism court in the city of Damaturu, killing at least 53 people. Following the initial attack, a group of militants rampaged through the city, attacking security forces and civilians, as well as blowing up as many as seven churches. In total, at least 136 people – including civilians and security force personnel – were killed in the coordinated attacks. Furthermore, on the same day, the group carried out a series of additional operations across northern Nigeria, which included the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and small arms against security forces and Christian targets in the Potiskum area of Yobe.²²⁸

25 December 2011

A number of coordinated attacks, including two suicide bombings, were then carried out on 25 December 2011, causing the deaths of an estimated 50 people. In the first attack, at St Theresa's Catholic Church, Madalla, Suleja, in Niger state, at least 27 people were killed and ten vehicles destroyed in addition to damage to buildings. At the time of the attack, it was estimated that approximately 90 per cent of the congregation were at the entrance of the church when the bomber drove into them at high speed. Francis Raphael, a member of the church's Security Committee, described how the suicide bomber appeared in a Toyota Camry car and confirmed that the vehicle detonated on impact at the time when first mass had ended and people were exiting the church.^{229 230}

The second location where attacks occurred was in Jos. The first target was the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Church. According to eyewitness accounts, 'a man with a motorbike dropped a bag just outside the church, one of our officials went to check what was in the bag and at the same time he reached it — that was when there was an explosion'.²³¹ Gunmen later opened fire on police guarding the area, killing one officer. Two other IEDs were found in a nearby building and

disarmed. The second suicide attack was executed against the headquarters of the State Security Service in Damaturu, as a suicide bomber detonated a car laden with explosives. Three people were killed in the blast, though the senior military commander, who was apparently the primary target, survived the attack.²³² Abu Qaqa, Boko Haram's spokesperson, claimed responsibility for the attacks.²³³

Analysis of attacks

Target selection

Of the above six successful attacks, the security services were the most regularly targeted, with four of the attacks being against them. There was only one diplomatic target, the attack on 26 August against the UN offices in Abuja. The other attack was directed against civilians when a Christian church was attacked on 25 December, on a day of great religious significance when the churches were full of people. These attacks were the first suicide operations by Boko Haram that deliberately targeted civilians. Certainly, a more general observation regarding the group's target selection is that they are normally directed against either Christians or security forces. The deliberate targeting of Christians is an especially concerning trend due to the religious divide that already exists and that has been the cause of sectarian violence between Christians, traditionally in the southern parts, and Muslims, traditionally in the northern parts of Nigeria.

Delivery method

Vehicles were used in all of the attacks that occurred during the period under review, although the devices did not always detonate, as was the case in the 15 August attack when targeted security personnel managed to prevent the attack successfully by eliminating its driver first.

Notable characteristics

Profile of attackers

Similar to AQLIM and al-Shabaab, the availability of information regarding any attacker's profile and some further details are largely dependent upon how much Boko Haram reveals following an attack. Out of those attacks just described, only the identity of the attacker on the UN building on 26 August was disclosed as Mohammed Abul Barra, a 27-year-old Nigerian national. According to Boko Haram's

spokesperson Abu Qaqa, Barra was a married auto repair worker from Maiduguri. Providing some insights into the recruiting process, Abu Qaqa went on to explain that his name had been picked out of a draw because a number of others also wanted to carry out the mission. Boko Haram later distributed a video recording in which Barra, in a soft tone, pleaded with his family to understand his actions, while issuing a warning to 'Obama and other infidels'.²³⁴

Although the identity of the other attackers was not disclosed, some important discernible characteristics of Boko Haram are that it attracts its membership from all walks of life, and that it has a sizeable following in three different countries from where it is likely that most, if not all, of its suicide bombers will be recruited: 'disaffected youth, unemployed graduates, and former Almajiris (street children), mostly in northern Nigeria. The sect also includes some university lecturers and students among its ranks. The sect is estimated to have more than 280 000 members across the nineteen states of northern Nigeria, Niger and Chad.'²³⁵

CONCLUSION

The devastating impact of suicide attacks executed by AQLIM, al-Shabaab and most recently Boko Haram during the period between 2007 and 2011 is unmistakable. Often attributable to domestic circumstances, which may provide ideal breeding grounds for the import and spread of extremist ideology, they are certainly effective in terms of their broader impact, not least in being taken notice of especially where it is possible that they may be part of a broader al-Qa'eda agenda. In addition to any potential influence by al-Qa'eda, the growing evidence of connections and collaboration (such as the sharing of militant training camps) between AQLIM, al-Shabaab and Boko Haram is equally concerning. This poses a further layer of challenges to those countries on the continent that not only have to respond to them directly, but are also confronted with the broader task of finding lasting solutions to the threat of terrorism more generally within Africa.

Preventing suicide attacks calls for a holistic strategy, not least in terms of addressing the underlying conditions, as well as implementing dedicated strategies and procedures to prevent recruitment.

Having analysed specific incidents, tactics, and other notable features of suicide operations, this chapter seeks to assist policy-makers and practitioners by making a number of practical recommendations aimed at preventing and combating suicide attacks, from the initial recruitment phase until just prior to the execution of an attack.

5 Preventing future suicide attacks

PHASES OF A SUICIDE OPERATION

This section will briefly describe the three principal phases of a suicide operation: research, planning and execution.

Research

This phase includes the gathering of intelligence that is necessary to execute an attack successfully. For example, by conducting surveillance of potential targets to determine important information needed to successfully plan the attack. This includes information regarding personnel, routines and potential obstacles attackers might encounter during the execution phase of the attack. The latter refers, for example, to counter-measures security forces or the close protection personnel are likely to initiate for a VIP. During this information-gathering phase, those engaged in this process will collate information such as photographs, sketches and maps of key people and locations, as well as other important details, for example, the travel schedule or any significant behavioural aspects of the intended target.

Similarly, of course, the security services also have important research functions to perform as part of their counter-terrorism operations, which will also be heavily dependent upon effective surveillance and other intelligence-gathering activities. Part of this process may also involve the identification of likely high-value terrorist targets – for example, governmental buildings, security facilities and public places with a symbolic value – including those that may be particularly vulnerable to suicide operations.

The need for vigilance and sensitisation should not be limited to those likely to be on the first line of defence, such as security personnel, but should be extended to others, such as civilian contractors working at these potentially high-value targets, so that they too may be vigilant for unusual behaviour, including being on the lookout for potential bombers seeking to infiltrate their ranks. Vehicles and people in the vicinity will require closer scrutiny, as will individuals who are ‘unnecessarily’ curious, especially when previous attackers tried to get access pretending to be contractors delivering supplies. Those responsible for protection and training, however, need to keep in mind that people involved in planning possible attacks will do anything possible not to act suspiciously or out of place. It is equally important that such vigilance is sustained, not least because the pre-execution phase of an attack may occur over many months, if not years, prior to its execution in order not to arouse unwelcome suspicion and thereby reduce the likelihood of the attack’s success. It is therefore important not to become complacent during periods of relative calm. Not intending to cause panic, but being vigilant and expecting the unexpected should be the first line of defence.

Planning

There are a number of elements to the planning phase of an attack, which include recruitment (if necessary), financing, training (military/operational and ideological), and logistics. These are likely to occur in parallel with the research phase, which will most probably continue right up until the time of an attack in order ensure that the most up-to-date intelligence is available. Part of the planning phase will involve determining such details as the selection of the target; the date that it should be struck, for example a particular ceremony (such as the 3 December 2009 attack on a graduation ceremony in Somalia), or on a date with ideological symbolism (for example the 11th); as well as the best time of day to strike (for example, during the early hours of the morning if the target is a military or governmental

one in order to reduce civilian casualties, or alternatively at a time likely to harm many civilians when they are the intended target). Some of the elements in the planning phase will be considered in more detail, including how they might be prevented.

Preparing the explosive device

Preparing the explosive device forms a significant part of the planning phase. It involves purchasing or stealing explosives (military or commercial) and/or preparing explosives from common household items. Depending on such factors as the particular features of a specific operation, the availability of items, etc., this phase may take some time. Often those preparing the device will try to use what is readily accessible, not least in an attempt to avoid drawing unwanted attention to themselves, particularly from security services. For the same reason, they are likely to purchase items from a number of suppliers and to spread out their visits over a potentially protracted period of time, as was the case in the subsequently foiled transatlantic plot in London.

There are a number of potential indicators that may suggest the preparation of an explosive device, some of which are detailed here:

- Theft or 'disappearance' of explosives (military and commercial) or explosive components (for example, fuses and blasting caps) from mines and military institutions.
- The purchase of large quantities of chemicals and fertilisers.
- Indications of explosive device experimentation, for example, the occurrence of explosions in remote areas late at night or early in the morning. These explosions are not intended to cause casualties or even the destruction of property; their sole purpose is to test the device.
- Signs of a residence being used as a bomb factory. Identifying these premises requires the assistance of the public, as well as rental agencies, which are obliged to inspect rented houses and apartments. Previous incidents show that those planning attacks made use of local nationals to rent apartments in an attempt not to attract attention. In addition to the role of rental agencies, ordinary citizens, especially neighbours, can be a valuable source of information. Following the aftermath of a number of attacks worldwide, neighbours informed investigators that the suspects who rented apartments – used in the

preparation of explosives or preparation of attacks months before the attacks – manifested similar behaviour:

- Neighbours who keep to themselves
- Window curtains or blinds that are usually or always drawn
- A noticeable pattern of visitors coming and going to the property, in particular unknown men. The open social interaction of these people at the residence will be limited to prevent neighbours complaining, which can possibly lead to closer investigation
- In the case of homemade explosives, strange smells might emanate from the property concerned

In addition to the direct involvement of security and intelligence agencies, the assistance of the public is crucial. There are two factors that will directly impact on the involvement and assistance of ordinary people:

- The relationship between the public and authorities: Is it a relationship of trust, or does corruption or the misuse of power prevent people from going to authorities with information? Will the identity of those coming forward with information be protected and, if necessary, what options are available for witness protection?
- The extent to which the public is aware of the possible threat and their responsibility to prevent it: This requirement will be further discussed under the section ‘Intelligence challenges in preventing attacks’.

An additional requirement is that sufficient legislation and regulations are in place to limit access to military and commercial explosives. Although military munitions might be under better control, the mining industry around the continent requires mass quantities of commercial explosives. While some countries might already have legislation in place, physically controlling these explosives remain a challenge. Within the African context, with specific reference to Somalia – in addition to finding a peaceful solution to instability – limiting the availability of military munitions requires attention. In the Kampala attacks in July 2010 the bomb builder used RDX, a component found in military munitions that is easier available in this region than in countries where access to munitions is controlled.

There are also other, more impromptu means by which military munitions may fall into the wrong hands. One more recent example was when the previous Qaddafi regime, in response to the growing internal revolution in Libya, opened up its armouries in an attempt to encourage loyal followers to take up arms in its defence. As a consequence, highly sophisticated weapon systems – such as Man Portable Air Defense or MANPADs – in addition to other conventional weapons (firearms, ammunition, explosives, mortars and mines)²³⁶ are now feared to be in the possession of AQLIM and even Boko Haram further to the south.²³⁷

Recruiting the suicide bomber

During the preparation phase, the potential suicide bomber(s) will also be identified, recruited and prepared for the operation. The time taken to identify ('talent spotting' in the sense of identifying those more likely to be vulnerable to extremist ideology and concepts such as martyrdom) and recruit potential suicide bombers is likely to vary considerably depending on a number of factors, such as the local political, socio-economic landscape (and associated frustrations) and the individual characters involved.

Training the suicide bomber

Even when a willing recruit has been identified, a certain amount of training or conditioning will still be required in order to increase the likelihood of a successful attack.

Execution

The planning phase of any attack is likely to include a 'dry run'. The aim of this will be to identify and find solutions to potential challenges to the operation, including those not previously thought of, as well as testing potential escape routes for those assisting the suicide attackers.

The final stage is, of course, the execution of the attack itself. From the perspective of the security services, who often have no prior knowledge of a planned suicide operation, detecting and/or preventing it may largely be dependent upon whether or not an attacker makes a mistake and/or arouses suspicion by their actions, which in turn alerts the authorities to the possibility of a terrorist attack.

UNDERSTANDING AND PREVENTING RECRUITMENT

Preventing suicide operations requires not only the successful interception of imminent attacks, but better comprehension of and responses to earlier elements of the process, notably where and how recruitment occurs. Four significant areas of vulnerability identified across the continent are considered here.

Mosques and Islamic education centres

The first area is mosques and Islamic education centres. From the outset, it is important to make a clear distinction between legitimate religious institutions and the right of people to practice their religion, and individuals motivated by an extremist agenda who seek to exploit such institutions for their own purposes, including for the identification of potential recruits. More commonly, while a mosque is generally open to the public, radicalisation takes place in smaller discussion groups. Within this less public environment, religious scholars or others in positions of influence – who can be difficult for younger or less experienced believers to challenge – can abuse their positions of trust to convert those searching for answers to some of life's more profound questions to extremist ideology and recruit them as potential suicide bombers in the process.

A significant facilitator for more recent recruitment, including by AQLIM, has been Western military interventions into Muslim territories, including into Afghanistan and Iraq, images of which have often been exploited by extremists, including for the purpose of anti-Western propaganda. There have been multiple examples during the last decade of mosques and Islamic education centres being used as vehicles for recruitment to execute attacks in Africa (as mentioned previously) and beyond. Two examples are:

- In Morocco, the Hsida mosque recruited two young residents for suicide bombings in Baqouba, Iraq, in October 2006.²³⁸
- Abdelhalim Badjoudj, an Algerian, was killed in a suicide attack on 20 October 2004 in Iraq. Previously, he was not a strict Muslim, smoking marijuana, drinking alcohol, listening to rap music and wearing Western clothing. Badjoudj returned to France in January 2004 to marry a French woman of Moroccan origin. Two months later he left for Iraq. Investigations after his death revealed that he

was recruited through mosques, Muslim centres and militant websites run by several groups, including Ansar al-Islam.²³⁹

Possible counter-measures

Muslim countries, in particular those that have been the victims of extremist ideological teaching, have implemented a number of counter-measures aimed at preventing the misuse of mosques for the spread of extremist views and eventual radicalisation leading to possible violent mobilisation. Some of the most notable are:

- Criminalisation of hate speech, including within but not necessarily limited to mosques: Most mosques in the Muslim world are government-controlled institutions and religious scholars associated with these institutions are government appointed, which facilitates their regulation. In contrast, religious institutions, including mosques, in other non-Muslim (at least formally) parts of the continent are private institutions. Therefore, it is more difficult to regulate their activities, as well as effectively enforce legislation on such matters. Although security and intelligence agencies might covertly monitor the messages being preached by religious scholars, any indication of this might harm the relationship between Muslim communities and the state. Indeed, any indication that a Muslim institution is being targeted by any governmental institution, including for the purpose of intelligence gathering, may well become a further justification and facilitator for extremists.
- Ensuring sound, non-extremist religious educational programmes for the clergy, including the establishment of (re)-education programmes where appropriate: Such programmes, together with the vetting of (potential) clergy may be more effective in Muslim countries where the religious establishment is under the control of the state, although such measures are likely to be equally unpopular and controversial in both, not least where the state is seen as interfering with fundamental freedoms of speech and religion.
- Locking mosques and other religious institutions after hours to prevent uncontrolled access: Although effective in limiting unauthorised access, radicalisation and recruitment rather takes place in smaller groups formed outside the control of religious establishments. Instead, open sermons are being used for broader 'talent spotting' after which the approach takes place outside public view.

- Ultimately, encouraging and allowing more open and honest interaction and debate can best counter radicalisation and eventual recruitment: Often, it is when people have profound, unanswered questions and frustrations that they are not permitted to voice (in fear of being persecuted), that they are more susceptible to the approaches of extremists. Terrorist recruiters may therefore exploit this isolation, making those recruited feel part of a select group sharing similar points of view. Being isolated, these views increasingly become more extreme, to become that of an extremist ideology.

Internet

The extensive volume of 'suspicious' websites and materials available on the worldwide web, in multiple languages including Arabic and English, not only makes the effective monitoring of them extremely difficult, but also raises a number of practical policing challenges. As Ronald Noble, the head of Interpol, confirmed in September 2010, the threat of serious organised crime attributable to the use of the internet has increased dramatically during recent years. According to him, the 12 websites used to spread radical ideas in 1998 had increased to an estimated 4 500 in 2006.²⁴⁰ This figure is expected to be much higher today.

From a radical and extremist perspective, the internet is an extremely effective and invaluable tool for reaching and radicalising people around the world, not least because of the accessibility of these websites and materials. Many young people, even from poor socio-economic conditions, frequent internet cafés where they have access to video material, training manuals and terrorist messages. It is, however, not only those coming from poor socio-economic conditions who are vulnerable; but also those from wealthier families far from conflict areas, introducing the third facilitator for recruitment: expatriate communities.

Possible counter-measures

The role of the internet in the radicalisation and possible eventual recruitment of suicide bombers is not a new topic of discussion. In response to the threats posed, most countries have reacted by adopting two broad strategies. These are:

- Covert monitoring of websites by the security services to spot and monitor users accessing 'suspicious' websites and posting materials on it: This is done in order to identify those who may be radicalised and eventually carry out

extremist activities. Although not all people accessing suspicious websites will become radicalised, those visiting these sites may require closer scrutiny. Caution is, however, key, requiring the involvement of intelligence agencies instead of an open confrontation. For the success of future early detection, these types of intelligence-gathering tactics need to be kept secret.

- Close access to certain websites: Although the closing down of specific websites might sound relatively easy, it is often much more challenging in practice for a number of reasons. This includes the fact that not all countries have comparable or adequate legislation in place to criminalise the different aspects of cybercrime. There may also be associated complex jurisdictional issues with, for example, the website being administered from a different country to the one where a person was radicalised and perhaps eventually recruited. It is, however, not the most appropriate answer for two primary reasons:
 - Nothing prevents those running the website to create another, and, therefore, an unknown forum.
 - For intelligence agencies to reveal that websites are being monitored will influence the introduction of counter-measures on the part of those creating and administering suspicious websites.

Monitoring and policing of the internet is a very specialised and relatively new discipline for law enforcement and intelligence agencies on the continent. Additionally, further steps are required to ensure that the correct legal framework is in place, which balances legitimate security imperatives – such as through the criminalisation of incitement – with respect for and the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms, perhaps most importantly here, the right to information and freedom of expression. It is equally important that national legislation forms part of broader, coherent and integrated regional and international legal frameworks, not least for the purpose of facilitating mutual legal assistance and extradition. In turn, these frameworks must be accompanied by the requisite levels of political will to be effectively enforced, as well as any necessary capacity building activities among the judiciary, legal practitioners and law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

Expatriate communities

From the suicide incidents examined it would seem that second and third generation immigrants may be particularly vulnerable to recruitment to participate in conflicts in their countries of origin. Certainly, this appears to have been the case with respect to al-Shabaab's suicide operations in Somalia, a number of which were executed by the children of Somali immigrants recruited in the US and Europe. The misuse of mosques or other Islamic educational centres can be a facilitating factor here also, as is illustrated by the involvement of Shirwa Ahmed in coordinated suicide attacks on 29 October 2008. A subsequent investigation into the recruitment of young members of the Somali community in Minneapolis in the US, where Ahmed had lived, revealed that attendance at the Abubakar As-Saddique Islamic Center in Minneapolis was a recurring theme.²⁴¹ In this case, the promotion of extremist ideology was assisted by the arrival of first Ethiopian, then AMISOM troops in Somalia, who were portrayed as invading and abusive forces.

Another possible contributing factor to the susceptibility of expatriate communities to recruitment is the concentration and/or isolation in a particular area that some diaspora – such as the Somali community in Minneapolis – can feel in their non-native surroundings. While it is natural for people sharing the same nationality, culture, language and/or religion to live and socialise with others sharing a similar background, communities who feel more integrated within their local surroundings are less likely to be open to extremist ideas or organisations, not least when the latter involve directly or indirectly attacking their new homeland. An important factor mitigating against such integration can be the manipulation of information concerning the original homeland – such as its poor conditions or political issues – communicated to these communities through the internet, satellite television etc. This may impact directly upon the willingness of such communities to integrate with their surroundings, especially if their new host country is portrayed as a source of the difficulties facing their country of origin.

In addition to such factors as the concentration of members of the diaspora community, a number of others may be relevant regarding the extent to which individuals have integrated with their surroundings:

- The time factor, namely how long an individual has lived in their new host country: Full or even partial integration may take generations. However, a

person who has just fled a conflict in their country of origin (first generation) may be more loyal to the receiving country than a second or third generation individual born there who has not integrated well and so considers their current homeland to be an alien one.

- The degree to which the expatriate community shares cultural or other characteristics and values with the host country: Clearly, the greater the commonality that exists between them, the more likely it is that at least some degree of integration will be possible; the opposite is true also, namely that the greater the differences, the harder it will be for a diaspora to integrate with its host surroundings.
- The political relationship between the host state and the diaspora community: The US foreign policy supporting Ethiopia when it ‘invaded’ Somalia probably played an important role in finding support, particularly among the youth, in the Somali expatriate communities around the world. While the US supported Ethiopia, it also started to look at Somali communities within its borders differently. Khat, considered by law enforcement agencies in the United States as illegal, first put the Somali diaspora on the radar, followed by the potential link to extremism and terrorism. Subsequently, members of the Somali community began to experience officially sanctioned challenges such as surveillance and the arrest and detention of its members. Therefore, the degree of integration of the diaspora group within the host society has important implications for potential security challenges.
- Political leadership within the diaspora group: This can be of importance in how the community interacts with both the state and militant groups within its ranks. Security challenges are sharply reduced when community leaders have strong community support, good links with elected officials and law enforcement, and speak out strongly against extremist activities. Conversely, where diaspora leaders are weak (or leadership is divided), relations with host authorities are poor, and militant activities are tolerated or supported by community leaders, the security challenges for the host country are exacerbated.

One note of caution here is that it would be a mistake to try to measure the potential for radicalisation based on the overall sentiments of a broader community or the viewpoints of its religious and community leaders. Those who embrace and act upon extremist ideology will be a minority, which ultimately comes down to individual decision-making.

Possible counter-measures

It is important to consider here how to prevent recruitment among expatriate communities without marginalising other community members. It is probably more effective here to suggest what not to do rather than providing practical advice. Any policies or practices – such as those of law enforcement officials – should never contribute to any perceptions of ‘us (the expatriate community) versus them (the state and its authorities)’. As explained earlier, even if people are not naturally inclined towards the ideas of radicals or extremists, categorising people based on religious or ethnic affiliation, as well as separating them for different, often discriminatory, treatment, will only serve to alienate them with the consequence that even more ‘moderate’ community members may become open to otherwise ‘alien’ ideas.

A preliminary step is probably for law enforcement officials to work with members of the expatriate community in order to identify those members most likely to be at risk for radicalisation. The success of any such process will be largely determined by the levels of trust that exist between governmental representatives and members of the expatriate community, not least in terms of the former being able to access the latter. Another way of securing some form of access is through employing members of the expatriate community in state structures – which itself may contribute towards improved integration – such as the police and intelligence agencies. Although careful vetting of any such recruits is important, caution must nevertheless be exercised in order not to create, or at least reduce, any impression and suspicions that these community recruits will be used to ‘spy’ on their own community members. Instead, the packaging and presentation of any such recruitment should be a delicate process in order to portray it in positive terms, such as highlighting the benefits of enhanced understanding of the needs of and particular challenges facing the diaspora in order for the state to respond more effectively to them.

Another important approach is to encourage integration while accepting diversity. Any attempts to try to force integration through, for example, legislation are likely to have the opposite effect. Instead, it is better to encourage effective dialogue between people of different backgrounds that has not been formally initiated by the state but rather through, for example, civil society organisations. Such dialogue and exchange of views will also assist state authorities to better identify, comprehend and respond to the specific concerns and challenges facing particular communities, thereby also developing increased levels of mutual trust.

Counter-terrorism strategies that facilitate radicalisation

The potential susceptibility of individuals to radicalisation and eventual participation in suicide operations should be considered within a broader framework of counter-productive counter-terrorism measures and tactics on the part of security forces and intelligence personnel. While countries must respond effectively to national security threats, for example through the adoption of robust counter-terrorist legislation, to effectively prevent attacks from occurring and combat threats posed by terrorism more generally, it is essential that they do so in a manner that respects human rights, the rule of law and due process. Regrettably this has not always been the case, including in the period since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 against the US (9/11 attacks).

More specifically, as detailed research on these matters have revealed, there can be a direct link between repressive responses of the state that erode the rule of law and radicalisation leading to violent extremism. Unfortunately, heavy-handed and disproportionate responses to terrorist threats or acts have been a recurring theme across the continent, despite the evidence of their being counter-productive. For example, Algeria engaged in a mass arrest and detention operation during the early 1990s. In an attempt to deal with growing radicalisation, its military 'arrested more than 40 000 people and sent them to camps deep in the Sahara'.²⁴² However, these actions had the opposite to the desired effect, strengthening rather than weakening the radicalisation of Algerians: 'For a while the military seemed to have the situation under control, but before long this massive relocation had an unforeseen consequence. The sympathisers and militants who had been removed and concentrated became much more radical while in custody and by the time they were released (beginning in the summer of 1992) they were willing recruits for the armed insurgent groups.'²⁴³

The Moroccan authorities responded in a similar manner following the Casablanca bombings on 16 May 2003, also engaging in a mass arrest campaign. This resulted in the Moroccan courts charging 2 112 suspected radical Islamists under national anti-terrorist laws with respect to the 2003 bombings, resulting in 1 126 convictions. Of this number, more than 80 per cent (903 people) received custodial sentences, and 17 death sentences were handed down.²⁴⁴

Some of the wording of the charges was, however, troubling from a rule of law perspective, not least in view of the severity of the sanctions imposed. For example, they included offences of 'forming a criminal gang in order to prepare

for and carry out terrorist acts'; 'being a member of a non-recognised association'; 'holding public gatherings without authorisation'; and 'attacking sacred values'.

Nor does it appear that such robust responses assisted in reducing the radicalisation of Moroccan nationals. Instead, according to a report by Morocco's secret service, approximately 2 000 'terrorist elements' were under surveillance in Morocco, indicating that Islamist extremists still pose a threat to the Kingdom. These figures were also confirmed by a study by the country's territorial surveillance directorate published in the *Al Ahdath al-Maghribia* newspaper in 2004. It further revealed that the majority of those under surveillance had similar social backgrounds to those of the Casablanca bombers in that they lived in poor socio-economic conditions with 13 per cent unemployed and the rest doing odd jobs. Most of them lived in Casablanca, Fez, Rabat and Tangiers.²⁴⁵

One more positive consequence of such surveillance and repressive measures was that they kept extremist groups divided, thereby preventing the formation of a unified organisation. The same measures, however, also facilitated the formation of smaller cell structures that are more difficult to infiltrate and monitor. In order to counter such a development, Moroccan authorities called for the assistance of ordinary citizens to report 'suspicious' activities. Certainly, since 2003 the Moroccan security forces have identified a number of such ad hoc structures and threats, possibly supporting the concern that mass arrests and detentions, coupled with a closed and not fully rule of law compliant judicial system, contributed to the radicalisation of a growing number of people.

Despite its previous responses to the 2003 bombings and consequences flowing from them, it would appear that many of the lessons regarding potential fuelling rather than reducing radicalisation have not been learnt. For example, despite statements from Moroccan security forces that the suicide bombings of March and April 2007 had been isolated incidents, an estimated 51 people were arrested by 8 November 2007 for their alleged involvement in these bombings. Most of those arrested had no links with the perpetrators, who were referred to as members of the Abdelfettah Raydi group, a Salafia Jihadia cell, from Casablanca, Mohammedia, El Gara, Kenitra and Agadir.²⁴⁶

Similarly, in 2009 it was estimated that 190 suspected Islamist militants were convicted of terrorism-related offences and sentenced to prison terms ranging from six months to life. The following summary provides some insight into the most publicised cases, which also involved politicians:

- In February, the authorities reported that they had broken up a terrorist network led by Abdelkader Belliraj, a Belgian-Moroccan with dual nationality. Subsequently, 35 people were arrested, including the leaders of three political parties – Mostapha Moutassim and Mohamed Amine Regala, president and spokesperson respectively of the then legal al-Badil al-Hadhari (Civilized Alternative) Party; Mohamed Merouani of the al-Oumma Party, another Islamist party; Abdelhafidh Sriti, a journalist for al-Manar television, an organ of Hezbollah of Lebanon; Al-Abadelah Maelainin, a senior figure of the Justice and Development Party, Morocco's leading Islamist party with 46 seats in Parliament; and Hamid Nejibi of the leftist Unified Socialist Party. The Prime Minister then issued a decree dissolving Al-Badil al-Hadhari, and a court rejected the Oumma party's application for legal registration. The 35 people arrested faced a range of charges, including attempted murder, money laundering, and terrorist financing. On 16 July 2010, the verdict of the trial court was that all 35 suspects were guilty of forming a terrorist cell that smuggled arms and committed robberies to raise money to carry out terrorist acts to topple the government. On appeal, a number of the sentences were reduced, but the convictions stood.²⁴⁷
- Seven members of Justice and Spirituality (al-Adl wa'l-Ihsan) were arrested on 28 June 2010 in Fez, identified as: Bouali Mnaouer, a pharmacist who holds a doctorate degree; Hicham Sabbah, a civil servant in the Civil Registrar, a local government branch; Azeddine Slimani, a high school teacher; Hicham Didi Houari, a civil servant in the Infrastructure Ministry; Abdellah Bella, a secondary school teacher; Tarik Mahla, a nursing school instructor; and Mohamed Ibn Abdelmaoula Slimani Tlemçani, a professor at a teachers' college. The charges against them stemmed from a complaint filed on 21 June 2010 by a former member of the group whom they had abducted and tortured a month earlier, accusing him of having infiltrated the group to spy for the government. Police arrested the men, searched their homes, and confiscated books, CDs, flash drives and computers without showing any arrest or search warrants. Claims of torture by the police followed, even though under Moroccan law statements obtained through torture or coercion are inadmissible as evidence against any defendants. Government officials are also liable to be prosecuted for acts of torture.²⁴⁸
- According to al-Adl wa'l-Ihsan, Moroccan authorities detained 5 733 of its members, including 899 women, between 24 May 2006 and 9 May 2009, mostly

on charges such as participating in unauthorised demonstrations and meetings. Under Moroccan law, speech or actions deemed 'to cause harm' to the institution of the monarchy or the Islamic religion may be prosecuted.

Such responses have not been limited to Morocco. Egypt is a further example of a state adopting repressive and often excessive approaches to counter-terrorism, not least in the wake of a terrorist incident. This is illustrated by its response to suicide operations on 30 April 2005 in which Ihab Yousri Yassin, an engineering student at Egypt's Zagazig University, killed himself and three foreigners, in addition to injuring at least 18 others in a suicide bombing. Later the same day two women, Negat Yassin (sister of Ihab) and Iman Ibrahim Khamis (Ihab's fiancée), opened fire on a tourist bus before turning their guns on themselves, causing no serious injuries. Egyptian police arrested an estimated 200 people in the two days following the attack, concentrating their efforts on the district of Shubra el Kheima where the attackers had come from.²⁴⁹ Although such a response is understandable in the aftermath of terrorist attacks, nevertheless such mass arrests and heavy-handedness are likely to be counter-productive, including for the purpose of intelligence or evidence gathering, owing to the fear and distrust that the security forces are likely to arouse. In contrast, a 'softer' approach of setting up a special anonymous call centre or making 'door-to-door' enquiries may have been more beneficial.

Such responses may also alienate whole communities, making them more susceptible to being infiltrated and influenced by extremists. This is true of the Bedouin community, who were subjected to mass arrests – approximately 3 000 Bedouins, including men, women, children, and elderly people²⁵⁰ – in reaction to the Taba bombings in October 2004. Furthermore, trust was broken down and barriers erected by other actions, such as the humiliation of tribal leaders and women by security officials during their counter-terrorist operations. In many instances, the only 'offence' of those arrested was being a relative of someone suspected of involvement in the attacks.²⁵¹ Security forces blamed the Taba blasts on an alleged terrorist cell based in Arish, consisting of Palestinians, Egyptians and members of the Bedouin community.²⁵² Although only nine suspects were named, thousands of people in the north Sinai Peninsula, including in Arish, were arrested, tortured and held incommunicado, while the leader of the suspected group and some of the other suspects remained at large. As such, this broad-brush approach was of limited success in terms of capturing the real perpetrators

behind the attacks. Furthermore, residents openly confirmed that the crackdown radicalised public sentiment even further against the government.²⁵³

A similar response followed the bombings in Sharm el-Sheikh on 23 July 2005. Although security forces had identified and detained 15 possible suspects, they nevertheless still rounded up large numbers of Bedouin tribesmen and other Egyptian nationals for 'possibly' playing a role.²⁵⁴ This arrest campaign extended to north, central and south Sinai. Among those arrested were men only recently released following their previous arrest in connection with the 7 October 2004 Taba bombings. The police sought to justify its approach with such explanations as needing to question the Bedouins about unusual movements in the desert tracks of the Sinai, where they lived, that would have allowed the bombers to evade the security checkpoints on access roads leading to Sharm el-Sheikh. Suspicious purchases of explosives, in a region where explosives are frequently used for quarrying and to prepare land for construction, were also investigated.²⁵⁵ The police had arrested a total of 95 people by 26 July 2005; with some 300 suspects being arrested in the Jabal Halal area (in central Sinai); and another 43 people – among them presumed terrorists, drug dealers and former prisoners – arrested while hiding in the mountains.²⁵⁶

In response to the resultant periods of sporadic clashes that occurred between Egyptian security forces and Bedouin tribes, an agreement was eventually reached whereby the Bedouins agreed to stop targeting policemen at checkpoints in the Sinai region and the Egyptian government agreed to release 16 Bedouin detainees, most of whom had been held without charge since the bombings in Dahab, Taba and Sharm el-Sheikh. The Ministry of Justice further announced that it would simplify its legal procedures relating to the retrial of a number of Bedouins in Sinai.²⁵⁷ Additionally, in July 2010, the Popular Democratic Movement for Change and the Nadim Center for the Rehabilitation of the Victims of Violence called for the release of approximately 10 000 people believed to be held on the basis of their political or religious rather than criminal activities. According to a lawyer at the Nadim Center, the majority were being held in administrative detention without any charges laid against them, attributable to the fact that in most cases detention was based on suspicion and not evidence that would stand up in court proceedings.²⁵⁸

A further aggravating factor for subsequent radicalisation can be the use of the military in some counter-terrorism responses. It is an unfortunate reality, not least from a rule of law perspective, that a number of countries in Africa have a weaker police force/service compared with its military. Ideally, law enforcement

agencies, which have been created and trained to establish and maintain law and order, should only be used for traditional law enforcement functions such as arrest, detention and evidence gathering. To some extent, whether the military or the police is the leading counter-terrorist force in a state can be indicative of how that state perceives the nature of the terrorist threats against it and its response to them: where the police take the leading role, acts of terrorism are treated as crimes under a criminal justice response to terrorism; where the military has the lead, this can suggest that acts of terrorism are categorised as 'war' that require a military response to them. Under the latter, nationals are brought before military tribunals that require a lower burden of proof.

The next element in which the state through its actions creates favourable circumstances for radicalisation is through its prison system – particularly when imprisonment is accompanied by torture.

Possible counter-measures

The Arab Spring is a stark illustration of the cumulative impact that repressive measures – coupled with other factors, not least the absence of democracy in practice and poor socio-economic conditions – may have in contributing to growing frustrations that, as in the cases of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, led to regime changes within the relative short period of a year.

It is too soon to make an accurate assessment of security sector reforms to date in all three countries. Suffice it to say, significant reform of prior policies, legislation and practices in response to terrorism – including on human rights, due process and rule of law matters – will be necessary, not least in order to curb existing levels of radicalisation and receptiveness to some to extremist ideologies. In parallel with such more formal changes is the equally pressing need to challenge and change existing and established mind-sets to counter-terrorist approaches. These will require more delicate, lengthy and difficult processes, not least because deeply embedded attitudes and practices are not easily reversed. Furthermore, any changes made are likely to endure only if security and law enforcement officers are equipped with the necessary professional 'tools', including for securing convictions without resorting to unlawful practices such as the employment of coercive interrogation methods. This will require further and tailored capacity building and training, which not only teaches good practices but also highlights the benefits of them, particularly in terms of the increased effectiveness of counter-terrorist measures.

Prisons

Prisons may also be misused as vehicles for the radicalisation of individuals – ranging from those convicted of lesser terrorism-related offences to those not previously exposed to extremist ideas or involved in terrorist activities. As a result of overcrowded prison conditions, only a small number of countries have the facilities and resources to separate individuals suspected of having extremist ideas from the wider prison population. Where this is not possible, which is the case in most prisons including on the continent, extremists are relatively free to pursue their recruitment drive among people who will often be more receptive than most to their radical ideas.

While holding people accountable for their actions, the radicalisation potential in prison while prisoners are serving their sentences is cause for concern. The following circumstances summarise the importance of prisons in the radicalisation process:

- The repressive conditions (social isolation and sensory deprivation) can never cut the person incarcerated off from the outside. On the contrary, isolation provides ideal circumstances for 'reflection'. This explains why a number of manifestos, such as Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and Sayyid Qutb's *Milestones*, were written from prison.
- Harsh prison conditions often provide the platform for religious awakening that will be discussed in the section dealing with new recruits.
- Prisons can also be used to win public support and justify a violent campaign through demonstrating the inhumane treatment of those incarcerated. One can only think of the consequences Abu Graib and Guantanamo Bay had on the radicalisation process of many throughout the world in enhancing the existing perception that the 'war on terrorism' is a 'war on Muslims'.

Two examples of where prisons played instrumental roles in the radicalisation process are outlined here:

- Ahmidan, a Moroccan national and one of the key suspects involved in the al-Qa'eda Madrid bombing in 2004, was a drug dealer and jailed in Morocco in 2000. During his time in prison he was radicalised.²⁵⁹

- Larbi Charef (aged 32, alias Abdel-Rahman Abu Abdel-Nasser al-Assimi) was one of the two suicide bombers responsible for the attacks on 11 December 2007 against the Algerian Constitutional Council and the UN. Previously, in 2004, he had been arrested and prosecuted for being part of a logistical support network linked to the GSPC. After his premature release from prison during the reconciliation process of 2006, Charef left for the mountains, where he received his training as a suicide bomber.²⁶⁰ Such actions suggest that Charef may have been further radicalised during his stay in prison whereby he became willing to be martyred for the cause he believed in, and not simply to support it as he had done previously.

In summary, radicalisation in prison can be divided into two categories:

- The first is where those persons affected have had some earlier exposure to extremist ideology and prior involvement with a terrorist group. While in prison, they may become further radicalised so that they are willing to become even more involved in terrorist activities, as was the case with Charef. In addition to such factors as unfairness in the law enforcement or judicial processes that resulted in their convictions and imposition of custodial sentences, the prison system and conditions may further fuel existing frustrations and anger. While some might expect those incarcerated for terrorism-related offences to learn from their experiences and turn away from previously held ideas, the reality is that many will find a new resolve. Anger (especially if the particular political and judicial systems are categorised as 'unjust'), often associated with mass arrests, and torture will further enable radicalisation while in prison. Someone prosecuted for a relatively minor offence seldom returns as the same person. Another important element will be the treatment of the individual after release from prison. Limited employment opportunities and harassment (to be referred to in the reintegration process) might also further enhance existing frustration and radicalisation. Realising that they will be under observation and the first to be suspected in the event of a terrorism-related offence, not all people previously incarcerated will overtly be involved in the execution of acts of terrorism. Learning from earlier experiences, these individuals might rather facilitate acts of terrorism 'behind the scenes' in the radicalisation of others or in the planning of attacks.

- The second category comprises people who were previously involved in other criminal, non-terrorist activities, but are radicalised and subsequently recruited into terrorist organisations while in prison. Certainly, this can bring a number of benefits for the person concerned, including the following:
 - A sense of belonging with fellow extremists in prison.
 - Mental or emotional escape that may be possible through their religious beliefs.
 - A sense of redemption for past crimes committed. Redemption for past sins (for crimes such as drug abuse and trafficking) make criminals vulnerable to extremists in prison, but criminals could equally be a valuable source of knowledge to terrorists. In using their experience for a justified cause terrorists have access to experienced smugglers and fraudsters, not to mention people who have experience in detaching themselves from acceptable norms of society. Prison authorities therefore need to take note of the interaction between extremists and other criminals while incarcerated.

Possible counter-measures

When countering the hardening of existing radical ideas the following counter-measures might be taken into consideration:

- Introduce a judicial reform process based on the following three core principles: rule of law, due process and recognition of basic human rights. This is the first step to limit mass arrests, torture and wrongful convictions. Additionally provide specialised training to law enforcement officials on how to enhance investigation and interviewing skills.
- Address prison conditions that might possibly involve separating dedicated extremists from individuals less involved and therefore more vulnerable.
- Develop and introduce individual de-radicalisation programmes, keeping in mind that people will say whatever they think authorities will want to hear or what is needed to secure early release or better conditions. This is probably the greatest concern with prison de-radicalisation programmes: how to assess the sincerity of statements of people renouncing earlier-held convictions?
- It is important in the healing process for a person wrongfully convicted that the state acknowledges being wrong. But this process also requires that the accused or wrongfully convicted will have access to the justice system to defend themselves, especially when considering that anger is often caused by an inability by

the accused to defend themselves against accusations. It is this anger against an unfair legal system (representing the broader state) that recruiters will manipulate to their advantage.

When countering the radicalisation of persons who were previously involved in other criminal, non-terrorist activities, a number of possibilities are suggested here:

- Where possible, separate suspected extremists from the rest of the prison population, in particular from those who may be especially vulnerable to radicalisation.
- It is important to provide those incarcerated with trained religious scholars of more moderate views who are able to deal not only with their basic religious needs, but who are also sufficiently equipped to counter extremist interpretations of religious texts. Often, either the lack of access to or the unavailability of well-trained clergy opens a void for extremists to fill.
- Prison authorities and guards need to be better equipped in order to recognise telling signs of any interaction between extremists and those they are seeking to recruit inside prison. Any related training programmes should form part of a broader, comprehensive strategy to address these issues.

Every effort should be made to reform prison systems and conditions in order not to further aggravate the frustrations and vulnerabilities of individuals, where possible overcoming the most common constraints to such improvements that are financial, manpower and space related.

Broader challenges and possible solutions

Intelligence challenges in preventing attacks

The major challenges associated with pre-empting terrorist attacks are related to the availability of the necessary information to identify the time, place, and mode of attacks in sufficient time so that appropriate action may be taken to prevent them from occurring. For most intelligence agencies one of the primary challenges is how to sift effectively through often large quantities of raw data collected, to separate out distracting 'noise' from the real warning signs. As with all such

agencies, they do not have unlimited resources or time in which to process and interpret data.

In addition, intelligence agencies require the capacity to deal with novel and emerging threats, including those that are decentralised in nature. Organised structures, where the primary players and/or their activities are more readily identifiable, may be infiltrated more easily. In contrast, where suicide attacks are being planned by individuals within a close circle of friends and/or family members – who are not part of an identifiable organisation, and have perhaps become ‘self-radicalised’ – intelligence agencies will be much more dependent upon public support. As previously discussed, however, the existence and extent of any such human intelligence from the general public will be largely dependent on the nature of the relationship that exists between the security forces and the public, including in terms of the degree of trust existing between them. Although technology – internet monitoring or telephone call interception – can to some extent mitigate some of these challenges, none can fully replace the value of human sources. Clearly such intelligence gathering methods need to occur within existing legal frameworks and structures to ensure that they are lawful and legitimate, and are not misused for illegitimate causes such as the curbing of political freedom. Such methods will only open up the intelligence services to further criticism and breed distrust.

Other challenges that might lead to what is commonly referred to as ‘intelligence failure’ in preventing suicide attacks include:

- Under-estimation or ignorance of the potential threat: There may even be the false perception that this type of attack will never occur within the territory of a particular state. Often such responses will occur regardless of the existence of information indicating that such an attack is both possible and likely. Similarly, this condition may exist when intelligence agencies inform political leadership of the potential threat and the latter refuses to act on available intelligence.
- Over-confidence: This can result in intelligence agencies forming the opinion that they have sufficient information regarding a particular threat and the resources to counter it. As a consequence, they may miss important details, information and links, for example, that allow a suicide operation to occur when increased vigilance might have prevented it. To be effective, intelligence gathering and analysis cannot be turned on and off, but rather needs to be sustained, often for a lengthy period of time, to develop a coherent and

comprehensive intelligence picture as well as the necessary capacity (sources). Intelligence agencies, where these do not yet exist, need to develop an institutional culture of always wanting to know more from all available sources and to test the strength of such information.

- Lack of communication within and between agencies: Multiple reasons exist for this challenge. For example, many agencies exist without a central command and control structure, which can breed inter-agency competition to access bigger budgets. Even within agencies, access to relevant information may lead to increased professional successes, which in turn may be linked to better promotion opportunities. In other words, when information becomes a commodity with personal value (including prestige and power), it may not always be shared as extensively as it should be for the benefit of ensuring public safety. At a more practical level, effective communication and intelligence sharing may also be hampered in a number of other ways, not least by different procedures governing each of these agencies that may hinder cooperation.
- Unavailability of information, often as a result of restrictions on the circulation of sensitive information: Sensitive information is given a particular classification that restricts its circulation, including to agents whom it might assist in relation to a particular operation.
- Inadequate expertise or experience: This may result in a potentially fatal failure 'to connect the dots' between different pieces of information that at first sight may appear disparate and unconnected intelligence. Agents or analysts responsible for turning information into useful intelligence may not have sufficient ability, training and/or experience to do so. In particular, it may be necessary to develop a specific skill set to interpret intelligence relating to suicide operations, including any unique features of this type of terrorist action. To put this differently, information comes from different sources and in bits and pieces over a period of time and although computer software exists to put information in context, it is still the responsibility of a person to analyse and interpret that information. Although it is relatively easy to blame analysts in hindsight, having the ability to present intelligence aimed at preventing attacks, particularly suicide attacks, is a skill not all personnel associated with an intelligence agency have.

From collection to analysis, intelligence is the most effective counter-measure to preventing attacks. However, as explained in the absence of pro-active measures,

preventing an attack might be in the hands of an ordinary person who notices suspicious behaviour and informs the authorities.

Profile based on behaviour

As was discussed during the earlier analysis in this guide concerning the profile of a suicide attacker, there are no standard attributes. Rather, suicide attackers come from different economic, social and educational backgrounds; are predominantly, although not exclusively, men; range widely in terms of their ages; and vary in terms of their marital status. Furthermore, any attempt to create a standard profile is further complicated by the fact that suicide attackers in Africa may be both local and foreign.

As it is not possible to develop a standard profile based on these physical and personal attributes, an alternative method may be to develop a behavioural profile instead, which may assist in better identifying and thereby preventing suicide attacks. Although not an exact science, since the individuals involved and the context of particular suicide operations will vary and have some unique features, the following behaviour may be indicative of a potential suicide bomber:

- **Tunnel vision:** The person's behaviour may look rehearsed and perhaps even mechanical. An especially telling sign may be when they are fixated on a possible target, and are almost oblivious to others around them. An unusual gait, perhaps almost a robotic walk may also be evident. This could indicate a person who is both trained and about to carry out a suicide mission. They may also show signs of irritability, sweating, and other signs of nervous behaviour.
- **Nervousness:** Although some might experience a degree of doubt, being nervous might also be associated with fear of being detected before the attack can be executed.
- **Evasive behaviour:** The individual may not only try to avoid eye contact, but also try to evade security cameras and guards. They may also appear to be surreptitiously conducting surveillance of a possible target location.
- **The wearing of heavy clothing,** which may be inappropriate to the season. Long coats or skirts may be used to conceal explosive belts and devices.
- **Bags or backpacks (used to carry explosives, nails and other shrapnel):** The bomber may hold their bag or backpack unusually tightly, perhaps even cautiously, and refuse to give it up when challenged.

- A hand in the pocket and/or tightly gripping something: This may point to someone clutching a detonator or a trigger for an explosive device. Such triggers, which may be designed in the form of a button, are usually rather stiff so that they are not easy to set off accidentally.

Unsurprisingly, it is generally easier to identify a potential suicide bomber on foot because they can be observed more extensively than someone in a vehicle. As a consequence, effective vehicle barriers, chicanes, checkpoints and established procedures form a critical aspect to establishing the necessary infrastructure and maintaining area security. Checkpoints may offer one of the few opportunities to make an assessment of the driver and their behaviour, including whether they are displaying any of the attributes just described, such as a fixed gaze and unusual nervousness.

Capacity building

As has been mentioned, despite the best intentions and efforts of the intelligence community, especially to prevent suicide operations from occurring, key personnel – including agents and analysts – may lack the necessary levels of training, expertise and experience. Even with the most capable agencies, it is important that training is ongoing, not least in order to stay abreast of new tactics employed by attackers and possible counter-measures developed in response to them. Such training also provides an invaluable opportunity to learn from the mistakes of others, for example, how best to react when security personnel encounter someone acting suspiciously, or what to do in the event of a vehicle suddenly increasing speed while driving towards a potential target. Trends can also be used to identify vulnerabilities, especially when practical scenarios are used as part of the training of security personnel.

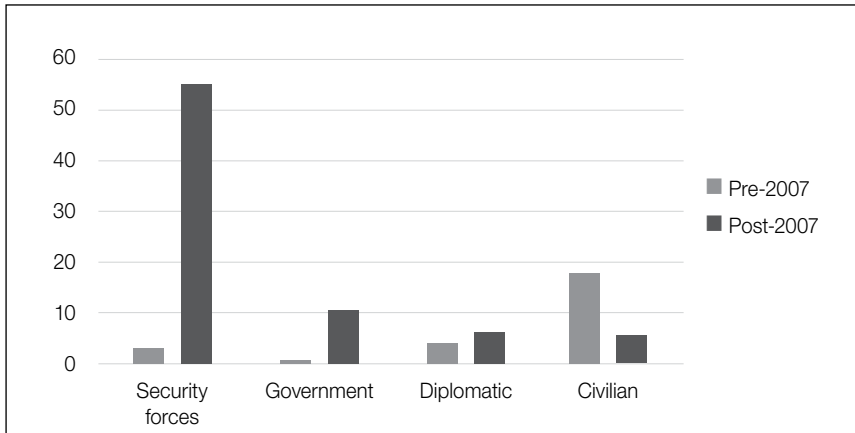
6 Conclusion

The previous chapters have sought to identify, give an overview of, and analyse the phenomenon of suicide operations that occurred across the African continent between 1998 and the end of 2011. Better comprehension of both the phenomenon and how to respond to it more effectively are of the utmost importance, not only because of the potentially devastating effects of such operations, but also because the occurrence of suicide attacks increased by 460% between 1998 and 2006.

Comparing suicide attacks before and after 2007, the following characteristics were noted with reference to target selection and modus operandi.

One difference noted when comparing ad hoc attacks (pre-2007) with attacks that were part of a broader campaign (post-2007) was that whereas attacks were predominantly directed against security forces and governmental officials in the period 2007–2011, most attacks were directed at civilian targets during ad hoc attacks. In particular, civilian targets with significant symbolic value – for example, places of worship (most notably synagogues and churches), or businesses associated with or owned by Jewish nationals – were the most targeted. Despite existing frustrations, the only suicide attacks directed at government representatives occurred in Somalia in 2006. The focus on security forces and government provides insights into the objectives of these groups: most suicide

Figure 11 Target selection analysis

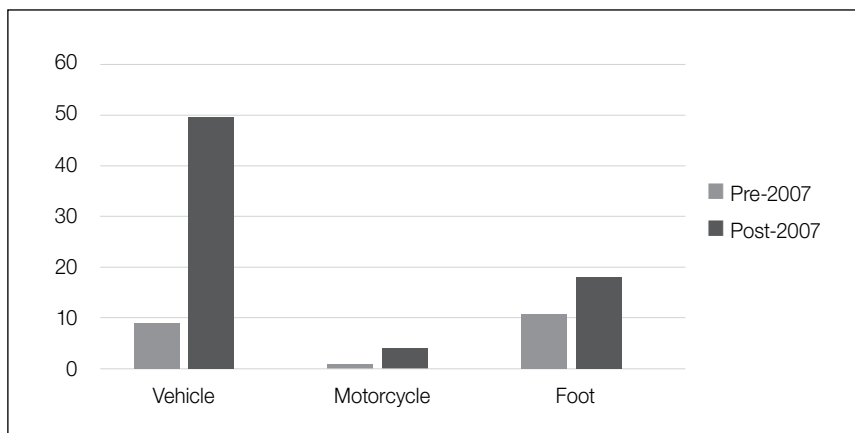


attacks formed part of a campaign associated with an insurgency. In an insurgency, opposing forces hope to overthrow the existing government and replace it with their form of government. Therefore, the implication is that attacks will be directed against government and security forces representing the existing government. Secondly, security forces, especially counter-terrorism units and intelligence agencies deployed to counter those involved in planning and executing attacks, are the immediate enemy – which explains the attacks directed against security agencies in Algeria, Somalia and Nigeria.

In contrast, during the pre-2007 period, most attacks were directed against civilian and diplomatic targets. Symbolic attacks against foreign government representatives at embassies were not directed against African civilians, while the latter bore the brunt of these attacks.

Bombers on foot carried out slightly more of the attacks executed during the pre-2007 period. A possible explanation for this is the fact that less financial backing was available for suicide operations during their earlier introduction to the continent, meaning that vehicles were less available. In contrast, the majority of attacks carried out during the post-2007 period have involved the use of vehicles, perhaps suggesting the availability of increased funding and/or the increased ability to acquire vehicles for subsequent use during attacks.

That said, the fact that some attacks were carried out on foot does not necessarily mean that they were less effective, especially when they were ad hoc

Figure 12 Modus operandi analysis

attacks rather than ones occurring as part of a broader campaign, and therefore less expected. Attacks committed during broader campaigns imply that security forces, but also the broader public, are more alert. It is therefore expected that suspicious behaviour will be noticed. This variable led to a number of incidents where potential suicide bombers detonated their explosive vests prematurely, thereby limiting the success of these attempts. For the above analysis to be helpful in planning and implementing more effective counter-measures, analysts should compare the frequency of suicide attacks with conventional incidents to get an accurate picture.

The attacks discussed above serve as examples of other challenges that contribute to suicide attacks:

- The impact of counter-terrorism strategies on the radicalisation of people previously arrested and incarcerated for less serious offences is a challenge. Before 2007, the role prisons play in the radicalisation process was taken less seriously.
- The role of the internet in radicalising people worlds apart opened a new debate on the censoring of the internet or monitoring and even limiting access to content versus people's right to information.
- Understanding needs to be developed on the part of people belonging to the same ethnic or religious group as those planning and executing attacks that

they should be first in speaking out against those using familiar institutions to recruit new followers and justify violence. The reality is that suicide attacks and other attacks of this nature do not differentiate between friend or foe, skin colour or religious beliefs; they kill and maim indiscriminately.

- The threat presented by very small cell structures involving friends and family in the absence of structured organisations is another challenge. As mentioned earlier, although not as dangerous as better-structured cells linked to networks with associated resources, other factors make these cells extremely lethal:
 - Often involving family and friends, detecting these cells can be difficult, especially if those involved take note of personal and operational security.
 - Loyalty extends beyond that to the organisation.
- Growing interaction between extremist movements on the continent – between AQLIM, al-Shabaab and Boko Haram – is evident. The immediate challenge in this regard is the fact that where practitioners and policy makers see a border (a limit to their jurisdiction), criminals and terrorists see more opportunities, in using differences in understanding of the threat, legislation and procedures to their advantage. It also implies that even countries not confronted with an immediate threat should be vigilant against their country being used as a transit or even safe haven.

While suicide attacks might seem remote for those not affected by the devastating consequences of this type of terrorist activity, it is a growing reality on the continent. Therefore, in order to counter this tactic more effectively, this guide has sought to outline three key broad areas that need to be addressed:

- The first is increased awareness, in particular of the characteristics and nature of this phenomenon. This includes the need for greater honesty that the phenomenon is not limited to international factors, but rather often involves local factors, not least the participation of local nationals in the planning and execution of these attacks. Awareness in the sense of increased vigilance is also important. As explained above, although countries confronted by groups such as AQLIM, al-Shabaab and Boko Haram are probably on a higher level of security alertness, the inherent nature of an ad hoc attack is its unpredictability, especially in the absence of effective, comprehensive and linked intelligence-gathering efforts to discover and prevent it from occurring. Consequently, it is essential that threat and vulnerability assessments and associated

counter-measures be regularly conducted. Practitioners and policy makers are encouraged to, as a result of awareness raised, consider additional practical solutions based on local trends and circumstances. Even in countries with similar realities, the circumstances in each are unique and require tailored counter-strategies and standing operating procedures – both based on local realities. For example, if the analysis indicates that security structures are more vulnerable than other targets, hardening these targets should be considered.

- A second, closely related, issue is the requirement for sufficient levels of commitment to address the underlying reasons – for example, socio-economic factors, and the promulgation of extremist ideology – why people resort to suicide attacks. This is a matter for both policy makers and practitioners. Great care is also required by both in terms of how they respond to terrorist threats and activities, not least to avoid being repressive, which in turn may become a further motivational factor assisting the recruitment of more suicide bombers. Commitment does not rest with only those directly affected; it calls for coordinated and high levels of continental responsibility and action to prevent the existence of safe havens or any form of support for the groups and organisations responsible for suicide operations. Therefore, policy makers, practitioners as well as the broader public on the continent need to realise that suicide attacks and other manifestations of terrorism are not foreign to the continent, and that underlying domestic conditions and frustrations enable radicalisation.
- The final key area is training, in particular through the introduction of more capacity-building initiatives, the importance of which in terms of better equipping those responsible for preventing and combating suicide attacks should never be underestimated. Even if officials are never confronted with an actual incident of suicide bombing, the techniques and procedures learnt will not only raise their awareness regarding the phenomenon, but many of these new skills and insights will be transferable to initiatives aimed at preventing and combating other security challenges. Certainly, for those practitioners on the front line dealing with, among others, terrorist activities, learning from others on the latest trends and incidents might become a matter of life and death.

Throughout the guide, and where possible depending upon the extent of the available information, an attempt has been made to identify significant, recurring features that may assist in developing basic profiles and common attributes, although the limitations of such an exercise have also been acknowledged owing to

the unique characteristics of particular suicide bombers and the contexts in which they operate. Additionally, a number of practical measures have been suggested that policy makers and practitioners, in particular the intelligence community and law enforcement officials, may take in response to this growing and deadly phenomenon. It is hoped that, at least in some small way, this guide might assist in approaching and responding to the growing phenomenon of suicide operations more effectively.

ANNEXURE 1: SUMMARY OF SUICIDE ATTACKS EXECUTED BY AQLIM AND AL-SHABAAB

AQLIM

2007	
11 April	At 10:45 two suicide bombers simultaneously targeted the Algerian Government Palace and the police station of Bab Ezzouar. ²⁶¹ The day after the attacks, Interior Minister Nouredine Zerhouni gave the official casualty rate as 33 killed and more than 220 people injured. ²⁶² The attack came as a surprise, not only in terms of the modus operandi, but also because it was committed against the capital, which was unexpected following four years of relative calm in Algiers.
11 July	A suicide bomber killed eight people near an Algerian military barracks in Lakhdaria village near Bouira town 120 km east of Algiers. This attack occurred hours before the opening of the All Africa Games in Algiers. AQLIM identified the suicide attacker as Suhail Abu Malih and said that more than one tonne of explosives loaded into a refrigerated truck had been used in the attack. According to security forces, Malih was one of four youths who had joined the group approximately one month before the attack. ²⁶³
6 September	A suicide bomber on foot detonated his device – carried in a bag – in a crowd who were waiting for President Abdelaziz Bouteflika to arrive, 45 minutes before his scheduled arrival, at the Al-Atik mosque in Batna, a town east of Algiers. The attack killed 20 people and injured 100 others. Belazrag el-Houari (alias Abu Al-Miqdad al-Wahrani, aged 28) was later identified as the bomber. Originally from Oran, el-Houari 'was part of a terrorist cell that used to operate in the western part of our country, but relocated to Batna due to intense pressure from the security forces about three years ago'. ²⁶⁴
8 September	A suicide bomber detonated his device near the coast guards' barracks in Boumerdes, killing 28 people. From the timing of the bombing – when the flag was being raised in the barracks, an event which was compulsory for all personnel to attend – it was evident that the attack was intended to kill the maximum number of people possible. One of the attackers was identified as 15-year-old Nabil Belkacemi (alias Abu Musaab al-Zarqawi). ²⁶⁵
21 September	Two French and one Italian national, their Algerian driver, and five gendarmes were injured in a suicide attack on a convoy of construction workers that was travelling between Lakhdaria and the village of Maala, about 100 km east of Algiers. The suicide bomber, identified as Othman Abu Jafar, detonated an estimated 250 kg of explosives upon impact with the convoy. ²⁶⁶

11 December	Two suicide attacks occurred in Algiers: one was in front of the UN offices, committed by Rabbah Bechla (alias Ibrahim Abu Othman, aged 64); and the other was in front of the Constitutional Council headquarters, executed by Larbi Charef (alias Abdel-Rahman Abu Abdel-Nasser al-Assimi, aged 32). Both used trucks that had been purchased the night before at the Tidjelabine vehicles market and had been loaded with 800 kg of explosives. ²⁶⁷
2008	
2 January	A large car packed with explosives sped towards an Algerian police station in Naciria, approximately 70 km east of Algiers. The ensuing explosion killed at least four police officers and injured 20 other people, including eight police officers. AQLIM claimed responsibility for the attack. ²⁶⁸
29 January	A car loaded with explosives targeted a police station in Thenia, 60 km east of Algiers, killing at least two people and wounding an additional 23 people. ²⁶⁹
4 June	A suicide bomber blew himself up near the doors of the barracks of the police in the eastern Algiers suburb of Bordj El Kiffan. Security forces later reported that one of the attackers was a 30-year-old who had resided near El Harrach, in the eastern suburbs of Algiers. ²⁷⁰
23 July	A suicide bomber on a motorcycle killed himself and injured 13 Algerian soldiers in an attack in Lakhdaria. He reportedly slammed his motorcycle laden with explosives into a military vehicle that was on its way back to barracks. This was the second suicide bombing to target the same army barracks; on 11 July, ten soldiers were killed and 30 wounded after an attacker tried to drive a truck carrying a bomb into the barracks. ²⁷¹
3 August	A suicide bomber targeted a police intelligence unit in the Berber province of Tizi Ouzou, 100 km east of Algiers, killing the bomber and injuring 24 police officials and civilians. The bomber, in a Renault car laden with 'considerable' quantities of explosives, had targeted the back entrance of the police station. This area included the main gate of the Operations Room of the Algerian army's 1st Military Region. ²⁷² AQLIM, in a message posted on the internet, claimed responsibility for the explosion and identified the bomber as Sahari Makhlouf, who security forces claimed was the mastermind behind the December 2007 attacks on the UN compound and Constitutional Court in Algiers. ²⁷³
9 August	A suicide bomber rammed a van full of explosives into the coast guard barracks and the National Gendarmerie at Zemmouri el-Bahri, a popular beach with holidaymakers, near Boumerdes in eastern Algeria, killing eight people and injuring 19 others. ²⁷⁴
19 August	A suicide car bomber rammed into a line of applicants queuing up to register at a police academy in the Issers district of the Boumerdes, east of Algiers, killing at least 43 people (of whom 42 were civilians) and injuring a further 45 (of whom 32 were civilians). Most of the civilians killed were would-be police recruits. ²⁷⁵

20 August	Twelve people were killed and 27 wounded when a suicide bomber targeted a bus as it passed in front of a hotel in Bouira. All of the deceased were Algerians working for SNC-Lavalin (a multinational engineering firm based in Montreal, employing 2 000 staff throughout Algeria). The SNC-Lavalin staff had been travelling to their place of work at the time of the attack. ²⁷⁶
28 September	A suicide car bombing killed three people and wounded six at the Takdemt district near the coastal town of Dellys, 100 km east of Algiers. The bomber targeted a checkpoint manned jointly by troops and paramilitary police guarding a nearby military barracks. One assailant detonated his device at the checkpoint while the other jumped out of the car and was arrested. Two soldiers, a communal guard and the bomber were killed in the explosion. ²⁷⁷
2009	
7 March	A man tried to enter the Tadmaït municipal guard barracks, near Tizi-Ouzou, but detonated his suicide vest prematurely when a guard confronted him. The attack killed three people – the suicide bomber among them – and wounded eight others: seven civilians and one municipal guard. ²⁷⁸
8 August	Three people, two of them French paramilitary gendarmes, were slightly injured in a suicide attack near the French embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania that only killed the suicide bomber. AQLIM identified the bomber as Abu Obeida Musa al-Basri and said he had failed to detonate his device inside the embassy because a barrier had prevented him from entering. According to an AQLIM communiqué, the attack was in response to the ‘aggression of the Crusaders, particularly France, and Mauritanian leaders against Islam and Muslims’. ²⁷⁹
2010	
8 March	A suicide bomber – part of a larger operation – targeted a military compound in western Niger killing five soldiers and three attackers (two were killed by the military). Five soldiers and three attackers were killed in a skirmish at Tiloa post in the Tillabery region, a military post in western Niger close to the Niger-Mali border between 06:00 and 08:00. In a message posted by the al-Fajr Media Center, AQLIM claimed responsibility and dubbed the attack as the ‘invasion of Sa’ad Abu Sariya’, naming it after a militant who had been killed two months earlier by the Niger army. ²⁸⁰
19 May	A suicide bomber detonated his device near a convoy of the National People’s Army (ANP) at the western entrance to Si Mustapha town in Boumerdes province, 50 km north-east of Algiers. Two soldiers were killed and 18 others wounded in the attack. ²⁸¹
10 June	A suicide bomber killed nine people, including four police officials and a Chinese worker, after driving an explosives-laden truck into a police checkpoint. The attack took place at midnight in the Lakhdaria district in the Bouira province east of Algiers. ²⁸²

25 July	A suicide bomber drove a car rigged with explosives into the headquarters of the gendarmerie at Beni Aissi area at a village near the city of Tizi Ouzou, about 110 km east of Algiers. The attack killed the night watchman at the village's town hall, directly adjacent to the gendarmes building, while eight gendarmes were also injured. ²⁸³
25 August	A suicide bomber, later identified as Idriss Ould Yarba (a Mauritanian national), attempted to force himself through the gate of an army barracks in a 4x4 vehicle. The blast led to the killing of the driver, while four soldiers were injured. ²⁸⁴
1 September	A suicide bomber detonated an explosives-laden vehicle as a military convoy was passing through a district in Boumerdes. This attack resulted in two fatalities and 20 people being injured. The attacker, identified as Abou Djendel (aged 20), had joined AQLIM only a few months earlier from Boumerdes. ²⁸⁵
2011	
5 January	Two Mali nationals were injured when Bashir Simun, a 24-year-old Tunisian national, exploded a gas cylinder at the French embassy in Bamako, Mali. Not killed in the attack, Simun was immediately arrested. ²⁸⁶
5 February	An AQLIM militant, surrounded by security forces, blew himself up in the Dar El Barka area of Mauritania's Brakna region. No casualties other than the bomber were reported. Another suspected AQLIM member was also arrested at the scene by security forces. ²⁸⁷
16 July	Two AQLIM suicide bombers killed four people, including three police officials, in an attack on a police station in Bordj Menaïel in eastern Algeria. The first suicide bomber detonated a car packed with explosives outside the police station. The second suicide bomber, who was riding a motorcycle, detonated his explosives as police and medical personnel conducted recovery operations at the scene of the first attack. ²⁸⁸
26 July	A suicide bomber detonated his device to avoid arrest in Bouhamza. The suspect detonated the explosives belt he was wearing when local security officials encircled him as he left a shop. ²⁸⁹
14 August	A suicide bomber attacked a police station in Tizi Ouzou when he rammed a Hilux pickup truck into the police station entrance, trying to force his way in to the building. Two people were fatally wounded and 30 people injured. In its statement, AQLIM named the suicide bomber as Anes Abu el-Nadr. ²⁹⁰

26 August	<p>A suicide bomb attack on a military academy in Cherchell, 60 km west of Algiers, killed 18 people (16 trainee officers, together with two civilians) and wounded a further 20 people. One or possibly both of the bombers detonated the explosives outside the mess hall, just after the breaking of the Ramadan fast. As soldiers rushed out to aid those wounded, a suicide bomber riding a motorcycle then detonated his explosives, in what was a multiple attack also targeting the first responders.</p> <p>Salah Abou Mohamed, who states that he is an official spokesperson for AQLIM, claimed responsibility for the attack. According to him, the suicide bombers were Abu Anas and Abu Nuh: 'Abu Nuh visited the cafeteria frequented by the apostates, wearing an explosive belt and armed with a grenade. He first threw his grenade before activating the explosive belt, causing deaths and injuries. Two minutes later, Abu Anas burst in the restaurant on a motorcycle bomb he exploded in the middle of those fleeing the restaurant and those who came from other buildings, causing deaths and injuries.'²⁹¹</p>
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Al-Shabaab

2007	
27 March	<p>A suicide bomber targeted an Ethiopian military compound in Darnole, Mogadishu, killing the suicide attacker and a taxi driver who was accidentally shot when Ethiopian troops retaliated. The videotape shown by Al-Jazeera television suggested that a person called Adam Sallad Adam had carried out the operation.²⁹²</p>
19 April	<p>A suicide bomber detonated his device as he rammed through the gates of the Ethiopian base in Mogadishu. The original explosion also caused further secondary blasts to occur owing to its proximity to nearby munitions. Al-Shabaab identified the suicide bomber as Kenyan national, Othman Otayo. A second group, calling itself 'the Young Mujahideen Movement in Somalia', also claimed responsibility and indicated that one of its most prominent members, known as Abdul-Aziz Dawood Abdul-Qader, had been the suicide bomber.²⁹³</p>
24 April	<p>A suicide car bomber, driving at high speed, targeted an Ethiopian military base in Afgoye, about 30 km south-west of Mogadishu, and wounded two Somali government soldiers.²⁹⁴</p>
3 June	<p>A suicide bomber in a station wagon rammed his vehicle against the front of the perimeter wall to the residence of Ali Mohamed Gedi, the then Somali Prime Minister, resulting in the death of seven people, including five soldiers who had been guarding the residence. Al-Shabaab identified the suicide bomber as Abdul-Aziz Mohammad Semter, and said that he had carried out a 'heroic martyrdom operation against an apostate prime minister'.²⁹⁵</p>
4 June	<p>Ethiopian troops fired at a suspected suicide bomber who sped toward their base, detonating the device and killing the bomber and a civilian (a 10-year-old boy) standing nearby. In a second attack, a small Toyota Mark II vehicle packed with explosives detonated outside the main gate.²⁹⁶</p>

15 June	During a string of attacks targeting Mogadishu, a suicide bomber on a motorcycle killed eight people and wounded ten others. A second suicide bomber rammed his motorbike into a truck of government soldiers who were guarding the residence of Mohamed Osman Dhagahtur, the deputy mayor. Five people, including the bomber, were killed. ²⁹⁷
10 October	A suicide bomber drove a pickup truck filled with explosives into an army base in Baidoa (manned mostly by Ethiopian troops) killing himself and two others near a hotel where Ali Mohamed Gedi, the Prime Minister, had set up his temporary headquarters. ²⁹⁸
2008	
8 April	An AMISOM soldier and four civilians were killed and 11 others were injured in a suicide attack targeting a Burundi army base in Mogadishu. ²⁹⁹ This was the first suicide attack targeting Burundian troops in Somalia. The spokesperson of al-Shabaab, Shaykh Mukhtar Robow, claimed responsibility. ³⁰⁰
29 October	Al-Shabaab executed five almost simultaneous suicide attacks in Hargeisa and Bossaso. Three attacks were carried out using vehicles packed with explosives in Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland, killing 29 people and injuring a further 30 others. One of these attacks, aimed against the Presidential Palace, killed three people, including the presidential secretary. The second was directed against the UNDP compound, killing several people. The third attack, against the Ethiopian mission in Hargeisa, resulted in the most casualties because of the number of people queuing outside to apply for an Ethiopian visa. At the same time as the attacks in Hargeisa, suicide bombers attacked two offices of the intelligence services in Bossaso, in the autonomous province of Puntland, and targeted separate interior ministry offices responsible for combating terrorism, killing a further six people. ³⁰¹
2009	
24 January	An explosives-laden vehicle that headed towards a control point manned by the AU forces in Mogadishu came under fire, causing the driver to lose control over the vehicle that then collided with a passenger bus. The suicide attacker detonated the device upon impact, killing 14 civilians. Security personnel opened fire, killing an additional five civilians and wounding 23 others. A 21-year-old university student from the United Kingdom was identified as the first British suicide bomber in Somalia. ³⁰²
23 February	Two suicide bombers targeted an AMISOM base in Mogadishu that accommodated peacekeepers from Burundi. One of the attackers got out of the vehicle and detonated his suicide vest, while the truck exploded inside the camp as soldiers were unloading the supplies that it had brought in. The two attackers killed 11 Burundian soldiers, while 15 others were injured. Mukhtar Robow (alias Abu Mansur), al-Shabaab's spokesperson, claimed responsibility for the suicide bombings on Mogadishu's radio stations, identifying them as Ahmed Sheikhdon Sidow Wehliye and Mursal Abdinur Mohamed Ali. ³⁰³

24 May	A suicide car bomber tried to enter a Somali military camp. When the bomber realised that he was unable to gain entry, he detonated his device in front of the gate, killing six soldiers and a civilian. The bomber was later identified in one report as Abdulkadir Hassan Mohamed, and in another as Abdelfatah Ibrahim Shawey. According to the political leader of al-Shabaab, Sheik Husein Ali Fidow, it was a teenager who had carried out the attack. ³⁰⁴
19 June	A suicide bomb targeting the Madina Hotel in Beledweyn killed at least 25 people, including Omar Hashi Aden (the national security minister of the TFG) and Abdikarin Farah Laqanyo (a former ambassador of the TFG to Ethiopia). According to government officials in Beledweyn, three men with a small vehicle detonated the device as they entered the hotel. During a press conference, Sheik Ali Mohamud Rage (alias Sheik Ali Dere), a spokesperson for al-Shabaab, claimed responsibility for the attack. The bomber was Mohamed Sheikh Derow Aden, a 17-year-old teenager from the south-central region of Bakol. ³⁰⁵
17 September	Two stolen UN vehicles entered and then exploded in the AU peacekeeping force compound and the headquarters of AMISOM in Somalia. AMISOM's deputy commander, Major General Juvenal Niyonguruzza, was among the 21 fatalities; and the force commander, Ugandan General Nathan Mugisha, was among the wounded. Omar Mohamed Mahmoud, a Somali-American who had lived in the US until 2007, was identified as one of the suicide bombers. ³⁰⁶ On 18 September 2009, Sheikh Ali Mohamud Rage, a spokesperson for al-Shabaab, claimed responsibility for the attacks, saying they were to avenge the death of Salah Ali Saleh Nabhan, who was killed in southern Somalia on 14 September 2009 during a raid by US special forces: 'We have got our revenge for our brother Nabhan. Two suicide car bombs targeting the AU base, praise Allah. It took place at noon on the 27th of Ramadan, the best blessing. We knew the infidel government and AU troops planned to attack us after the holy month. This is a message to them.' ³⁰⁷
3 December	Somali government spokesperson Abdi Haji Gobdon confirmed that the Minister for Health (Qamar Aden Ali), Minister for Higher Education (Professor Ibrahim Hassan Adow), and Minister for Education (Ahmed Abdullahi Wayeel) were among an estimated 22 people killed in a suicide attack targeting a graduation ceremony for 43 medical, engineering and computer science students of Benadir University in Mogadishu. ³⁰⁸ The attack took place at the Shamo Hotel as the graduation ceremony was about to start. Among the 200 injured was the Minister for Sports (Suleyman Olad Roble), who later succumbed to his injuries and died. ³⁰⁹

2010	
15 February	The Somali Minister of Defence, Yusuf Mohamed Indha'adde, survived a car bomb explosion that killed two civilians. According to the Minister, a suspicious vehicle followed him, but exploded before colliding with his vehicle. A TFG official later confirmed that two suicide car bombs and a wheelbarrow laden with explosives had targeted the Minister's convoy as it had travelled in Maka Al Mukaram street in Mogadishu. Two bodyguards in a car driving behind the Minister were wounded. As the convoy stopped to collect the wounded, a second vehicle and then the wheelbarrow packed with explosives detonated nearby. Several eyewitnesses said two civilians were killed in the explosion, which sparked an exchange of gunfire in the neighbourhood. ³¹⁰
27 April	Seven people, including five AU peacekeepers, were wounded in a suicide car bombing near their base in Mogadishu. The attackers, identified by al-Shabaab as Ahmad Muhammad Yusuf and Abdullahi Yasin Arale, two young Somali nationals, were the only fatalities in the attack. ³¹¹
11 July	Al-Shabaab executed its first suicide attack outside of Somalia's borders on 11 July 2010 when two suicide bombers targeted two venues in Kampala, Uganda that were showing the FIFA World Cup final taking place in South Africa. The attacks were executed at approximately 22:25 at the Ethiopian Village Restaurant, and at 23:15 at the Kyadondo Rugby Club, resulting in 74 deaths and 57 injured. ³¹²
24 August	Suicide bombers killed 30 people, including six Members of Parliament, in a suicide attack on the Muna Hotel in Mogadishu. The two militants were disguised as government security forces. Five other MPs were also wounded. One of the attackers was identified as 16-year-old Aden Hussein, who had been working as a bodyguard for senior al-Shabaab leader Muktar Robow. ³¹³
9 September	Two vehicles targeted the gates of Aden International Airport, killing at least 25 people. The first car exploded when peacekeepers manning the checkpoint tried to stop it from entering the gate. Two further attackers wearing suicide vests exited from the second vehicle and started firing at the peacekeepers. According to the AU, both suicide bombers, dressed in TFG military uniforms, blew themselves up as they tried to reach the airport terminal. Both were brought to a halt within 200 m of the terminal building where they exploded their vests. A total of five suicide attackers participated in this attack. ³¹⁴
20 September	A suicide attacker detonated his device at the gates of the Presidential Palace in Mogadishu as he tried to jump onto an armoured vehicle as it drove into the Palace. AU peacekeepers fired at the bomber, who was dressed as a soldier, to stop him from jumping onto the vehicle. The attacker was later identified as a former interior ministry security guard who had defected to al-Shabaab. ³¹⁵

2011	
21 February	A suicide car bomb targeted the Darwish camp, a site used by a police unit and adjacent to a police academy in Mogadishu. According to the authorities, there were approximately four suicide bombers who participated in the attack, including a woman and a man thought to be light skinned. Using a truck laden with petrol and approximately nine tonnes of explosives, the attackers had attempted to penetrate the perimeter but were stopped by the guards who had opened fire. Two of the attackers were instantly killed, and the driver was seriously injured before he hit the gate and detonated the explosives. The attack killed nine people and left 35 others injured – the dead included two children aged 10 and 11. One police officer confirmed that at least six police officials were killed as officers reported for duty. ³¹⁶
30 May	Two out of three suicide bombers, disguised as Somali government troops, were killed before entering the base. However, the third attacker was able to detonate his device, which resulted in the death of two AU troops and five other soldiers being injured. ³¹⁷ One of the attackers was identified as Abdullahi Ahmed, a 25-year-old Somali-American who had moved from Minnesota, in the US, to Somalia two years previously. ³¹⁸ Mumina Roba, a Somali woman living in St Pauls, in the US, identified Ahmed as her stepson, Farah Mohamed Beledi (aged 27). ³¹⁹
9 June	An AMISOM peacekeeper was killed and four others wounded when two suicide bombers attacked a UN World Food Programme warehouse and a bureau-de-change in the port area of Mogadishu. At least one nearby civilian was also killed in the attack. ³²⁰
1 August	Two suicide bombers, dressed in Somali TFG uniforms, attacked an AMISOM military base in Mogadishu, killing at least two AU soldiers. ³²¹
4 October	More than 70 people were killed in Mogadishu when a truck laden with drums of fuel rammed a checkpoint outside the compound housing government ministries in the K4 area. At the time students were gathered to register for scholarships offered by Turkey. Al-Shabaab spokesperson Ali Mohamud Rage identified the suicide bomber as Somali student Bashar Abdullahi Nur. ³²²
18 October	Four people were killed in a suicide attack at the perimeter wall of the former Ministry of Foreign Affairs building in Mogadishu. The building was recently refurbished with assistance from Italy, but government officials had yet to begin using it. The area, better known as Isgoyska Banaadir (Banadir junction), is a well-known and busy commercial district. ³²³
23 October	A suicide bomber ran after a convoy of AU peacekeepers near the Tribunka square in Mogadishu before detonating his explosives, wounding three people. It was unclear from the report whether the casualties were AMISOM personnel or nearby civilians. ³²⁴

29 October	Two suicide bombers, disguised in military uniform, detonated their explosives injuring two soldiers near the entrance to an AU base in Mogadishu. Two other armed attackers entered the compound resulting in a two-hour gunfight in which ten people were killed. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack and said one of the bombers was a Somali-American from Minnesota, in the US, identified as Abdisalan Hussein Ali. Following the attack, al-Shabaab released a tape that it claimed had been made by the bomber prior to his assault, featuring an American-accented voice using US slang to preach jihad. The group threatened further attacks on Canada. ³²⁵
30 November	A suicide bomber dressed in a military uniform detonated his device at the Somali army headquarters in Mogadishu. General Abdikarim Yusuf Dhagabadan, the chief of Somalia's armed forces, believed he was the target of the attack as it occurred just as he was arriving for work. Four soldiers were killed and 12 others were wounded. ³²⁶
6 December	A suicide bomber in a vehicle detonated his device approximately 50 m from the recently reopened Turkish embassy, near the Kilometre 4 (K4) junction. An eyewitness explained that security forces stopped the vehicle earlier, before moving the car to a quieter side road: 'The troops tried to question the driver and take photographs when the suicide bomber detonated his bomb.' The immediate death toll included two police officers, two civilians and the attacker, while at least ten more people were injured. According to the Turkish embassy, none of its staff was injured in the explosion. ³²⁷

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Suicide attacks are a brutally effective terror tactic, irrespective of when, where or how they are executed. In Africa, the US Embassy attacks in Nairobi and Dar es-Salaam in 1998 were the first, before AQLIM, al-Shabaab and Boko Haram became household names in counter-terrorism circles. This guide hopes to shed light on the application of this tactic in Africa. From those behind the attacks to those more frequently targeted, or the most used delivery method, this publication was written with practitioners and policy makers in mind. By understanding the application of suicide attacks in the past, and identifying how and where people are being recruited, the aim of this guide is to assist practitioners and policy makers to initiate pro-active strategies in preventing future attacks.

Les attentats suicide représentent une tactique de terreur d'une brutalité et efficacité extraordinaires, quel que soit le moment, le lieu ou la méthode de perpétration. En Afrique, les attaques de l'Ambassade des Etats Unis à Nairobi et Dar-es-Salaam en 1998 en ont fondé les prémisses avant que des noms comme AQMI, al-Shabaab et Boko Haram ne deviennent des marques de notoriété dans les cercles de lutte contre le terrorisme. Cette publication vise à faire la lumière sur l'application de cette tactique en Afrique. Elle a été rédigée pour un auditoire d'experts et de responsables politiques, abordant autant les individus à la base des attentats que les personnes les plus souvent ciblées ou la méthode la plus utilisée pour les perpétrer. L'objet de cette publication est d'aider les experts et responsables politiques à lancer des stratégies proactives en vue d'empêcher des attentats futurs, en apportant une meilleure compréhension sur la perpétration des attentats suicide du passé et en identifiant la manière et les lieux de recrutement des terroristes.

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