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SECURITY / INTELLIGENCE / CONSULTING

BETWEEN THE SEAMS

Africa Under Attack - The Rise in Hotel Bombings and What Can We Learn from Cote d'Ivoire?

BLUF

- Armed assaults against hotels and other soft targets are fairly easy to plan and execute
- Have a direct correlation with providing high impact for low input
- Although the presence of westerners is an important factor in the targeting of hotels, such attribution fails to account for the growth in the frequency and lethality of latest incidents.

Proposed Solution

- An analysis of soft targets on the continent and lessons learned collected from previous attacks. Coordination within the AU on what an African response to counter terrorism should look like.
- There is the need to increase surveillance within and outside the vicinity of hotels, improve stringent protective security measures and expand training for hotel security staff.
- Provide training on situation awareness and rapid response, and establishing or strengthening Special Operations Forces for timely and effective response.
- Development of an African Intelligence Fusion Center (maybe regional). This allows for collaboration and sharing of information in order to prevent future attacks.

Africa by nature has been the target of numerous terrorist attacks. The continent can attest to some of the most heinous crimes against humanity and atrocities committed with the main goal of instilling terror in the community. The response from the west has been mixed with an attitude that these attacks are local or regional in nature and can only be solved within a local context.

In 2007 the increased presence of Al Qaeda in North west Africa and Al Shabab in Somalia saw these transnational groups adapt and progress in their attacks. They have become more sophisticated in their approach and more targeted as they aim to achieve the most terror with limited input to the operation. Most recently the nature of attacks on the continent of Africa has changed.

Tunisia in June 2015, Mali in November 2015, Burkina Faso in January 2016 and now Ivory Coast, the attacks in the Sahel region all followed a similar pattern. A small group of gunmen attacked civilians, tourists or business people on a popular beach or in a hotel. In recent months, Mali and Burkina Faso – countries bordering Ivory Coast – have suffered hotel attacks. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb claimed responsibility for both. The attack on the Radisson Blu hotel in Bamako, Mali, left 20 people dead, while 30 were killed in the assault on Hotel Splendid in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in January. Furthermore, a plot against a hotel in Morocco was thwarted in February, and there have been new warnings of possible plots against hotels in the region, including in Senegal and Chad.

They are also cost-effective because they do not require many resources other than firearms and willing suicide operatives. Armed assaults do not require much in the way of special training and are not limited to professionals. Most jihadist recruits are trained to use small arms and grenades, so they are well prepared to conduct such attacks. The use of women has also created an interest dynamic that has only added complexity to the proposed solution and deterrence strategy.

These recent attacks have prompted concerns over soft targets in Africa, in this case hotels have become key target in terrorist hit list. To be sure, attacks on hotels in Africa are not new. Security analysts often attribute this development to the presence of westerners in such hotels. The growing attack on hotels is not unconnected to the effect of international coalition against established global terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda and the ISIL which has made them to expand fronts

of 'insecurity' in fragile, conflict or post-conflict states. The successes of international strikes against these global terrorist movements have increased the need for cooperation between them and other local terrorist groups that advocate similar ideology. This threat encapsulates the symbiotic nature of 'glocal' terrorism. This phenomenon reflects the emerging threat posed by a global terrorist group that establishes alliance with, or accept allegiance from, local terrorist group; it benefits both parties. The global terrorist movement benefits, as it can expand its influence, operational reach and size, while gaining wider credibility to its narrative that it is championing the cause of Islam. The local entity gets credibility and attention from internal government structures that have often seen these groups as disenfranchised from the larger group. This glocal concept equally inspires impressionable youths to carry out 'lone-wolf' attacks in the name of Islam. Although some domestic terrorist groups have long operated in Africa, most of these groups are increasingly pledging allegiance to established global terrorist movements such as Al Qaeda and ISIL.

The attacks will continue to occur unless what is to be determined soft targets are provided with the level of security and surveillance. Unfortunately, some African nations lack the resources to provide such security or are not privy to the intelligence where a pending attack can be thwarted. Cote d'Ivoire is in a growth cycle and has an ability to leverage the growing economic value of tourism and injection of foreign direct investment. Its recent MCC status as a compact country will allow for this continued economic growth and stability that will for an environment that can deter a raise in extremist ideology. For this continued growth to continue it is imperative that security becomes a priority and lessons learned from the attack applied to the creation of an intelligence analysis cell that can allow for development of strategies with the region to prevent a future attack not only in Cote d'Ivoire but in the region as a whole.



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