

East African Embassies Bombing

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Executive Summary

On August 8, 1998, The New York Times reported the incident happened late Friday morning, targeting two embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, killing approx. Eight people, including eight Americans. In Nairobi, a huge blast ripped through Haile Selassie Avenue at about 10:35 a.m., turning the busy downtown into the sight of destruction and carnage that left nearly sixteen hundred people wounded and many still missing after nightfall. The explosion not only levelled a three-story secretarial school building and half of the next-door U.S. embassy but also incinerated people passing on foot and sitting in three nearby buses. Only moments ago, a bomb embedded in a gasoline truck blast near the front door of the U.S. embassy situated in Tanzania. The strike destroyed the front side of the embassy and killed seven people, no American. This was the initial reporting of the incident on the following day. However, the number of casualties is much higher than claimed (Jr., 2018).

According to the FBI, on August 7, 1988, Al Qaeda, an Islamic militant group including several individuals such as Usama Bin Laden, Abdullah Ahmed, Ayman Al-Zawahiri and Saif Al-Adel, carried out a deadly attack in front of American embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam. The killing was disastrous. A massive 2,000-pound truck bomb struck the embassies and killed two hundred and twenty-four people, counting twelve Americans. More than four thousand people were injured in the attack. After the incident, over a hundred FBI agents and employees travelled to the affected countries and began the investigation. Numerous main suspects of the East Africa bombing have been killed together with Usama Bin Laden, a few are waiting for trial, and six offenders are serving life sentences in U.S prison. The case is still not closed as Abdullah Ahmed, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, and Saif Al-Adel are fugitives and wanted by the FBI for their alleged role in the bombing ("East African Embassy Bombings", 2018).

This attack not only shook Western security services but also impressed the Islamist militant movement. It also strengthens Usama bin Laden, considered the leader of al-Qaida, and has been taken more seriously by security services and Islamist militant groups. Before this, Usama was taken as a Saudi-born rich young lad who had never experienced cells, safe houses and first-hand day-to-day combat in the streets. But the African bombing made a lot of people take him seriously. It was al-Qaeda's primary terrorist attack internationally and a turning point for the group in the history of terrorism. These incidents showed how tough and bold al-Qaeda had become in its conflict with the American nation. The group pulled off spectacular, well-calculated mass casualty attacks on two embassies. Bin Laden was anti-west after the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union. He helped anti-Soviet battles as a financier by collecting funds from Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf. In 1989, the invasion ended in Afghanistan, and bin Laden returned to Saudi Arabia after travelling to the front

lines of the war. He strictly condemns welcoming hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops during the Persian Gulf War in Saudi Arabia (Alexander & Swetnam, 2001). The embassies bombing incident happened on the 8th anniversary of the placement of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia and was widely believed to be revenge for American contribution in the arrest and torture of four individuals of EIJ (Egyptian Islamic Jihad), arrested in Albania for murders in Egypt.

As a reaction, the American government launched cruise missiles. Clinton administration opens these attacks on poorly selected targets in Sudan and Afghanistan. These attacks made the Taliban, Who had been firstly cautious of the extremist Arabs existing in the land they had just occupied, more convinced of Usama bin Laden's global agenda of attacking American citizens wherever they could be found. This development led to more lethal terrorist attacks. The Yemen strikes by guided missiles, which destroyed USS Cole in 2000, allowed Usama bin Laden to gain control of the broken militant association. His group became a benchmark for other Islamic world military groups who needed guidance with attacks of their own. This placed the foundation for the networking and affiliations between extremists and are still so significant today. The American Embassy attacks in East Africa also promoted the new beginning of a conflict with no regional boundaries (Shinn, 2004).

After fourteen years, on Jan 22, 2015, the third hearing in that occurrence began in Manhattan. A federal prosecutor, Nicholas J. Lewin, portrayed the defendant, Khaled al-Fawwaz, as a trusted and loyal operative of al-Qaeda who had run a training base camp in Afghanistan and also led a terror cell in Kenya, Nairobi, broadcasting al-Qaeda messages worldwide. According to a CNN fact sheet, twenty people were convicted of the U.S. bombing, and eight are currently serving prison. Few are dead, including bin Laden, who has been killed in Abbottabad, Pakistan (Beard, 2001).

Recommendations

To minimize the damage in case of such horrible attacks, the employees must be prepared and trained to handle the immediate situations. In the Kenyan attack, employees went to the windows to see what was happening when they heard the gunshots and were shot dead or severely injured. Another major factor is the distance of the embassy from other buildings and roads. When the Kenyan attack took place, the majority of the casualties happened because of the collapse and broken glass from nearby buildings, as the embassy was located on the two busiest streets in Nairobi. Embassy buildings should have enough space from the street and other buildings. Outside fences and bars can help prevent the attackers from getting close to the actual building and carrying out the attack. Intelligence authorities did not warn embassies in East Africa before the attacks despite the several alleged threats received by intelligence authorities against U.S. diplomats. There should be a prior warning given to the embassies by the authorities to be prepared for any emergency situation (Kagwanja, 2006).

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