

Conflict Prevention and Risk Analysis (CPRA) –Pretoria



CPRA Daily Briefings

Week 20

Wednesday, 30 May 2012

The **CPRA Daily Briefings** are held weekday mornings in the CPRA Pretoria's Situation Room and the Briefing Notes are the minutes of this meeting during which each regional expert of the Programme reports on the latest human security developments in his/her region, followed by general discussions around the table. An intern then compiles a summary of the meeting, which is reviewed by the respective researchers, and a senior researcher edits the report and provides quality control before returning it to the intern to prepare it for dispatch to the mailing list to which you have subscribed.

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**Today's Briefings
Compilation**
Ms Naomi Kok

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Summary of Briefings

East Africa and the Horn of Africa

Kenya: terrorist attacks increase after ‘Linda Nchi’

Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Odinga has labelled Monday’s blast in a Nairobi shopping centre as a terrorist attack. This contradicts earlier statements made by the police, in which it was claimed that the blast was due to an electrical fault.

Since 15 October 2011 there has been a gradual increase in the number of casualties and terrorist attacks taking place on Kenyan soil. The terrorist group Al-Shabaab has been blamed for these attacks, since it had warned Kenya of revenge attacks following Kenya’s incursion into Somalia last year. However, Al-Shabaab has not always been quick to claim responsibility for attacks. It is possible that Al-Shabaab may indeed be behind these attacks, but that it is not claiming responsibility out of concern over a possible backlash against the Somali community in Kenya. However, there are more than 30 outlawed criminal groups operating in the country that are also capable of staging such attacks. At the moment, one of the best ways to determine the identity of those responsible is through considering the modus operandi. Many of these groups rely on machetes, popularly known as ‘pangas’, and not grenades. By virtue of the modus operandi, therefore, all indications point to Al-Shabaab. But the modus operandi can be mimicked and is thus not always a reliable way to determine responsibility. Witnesses to yesterday’s attack say that they saw a bearded individual at the shopping centre, and that this individual left behind a bag when he exited the centre. While this circumstantial testimony may indicate that Al-Shabaab could be responsible, the incident must still be investigated.

These developments raise serious concerns over the general security situation in Kenya. Odinga has admitted that Kenya is under attack, but at this point Kenya cannot identify its attackers with absolute certainty, despite indications pointing to Al-Shabaab. The fact that Odinga was so quick to claim it was a terrorist attack while the police had issued a different statement, is cause for concern over the communication structure in the case of a crisis and politicians’ sources of information. A further cause for concern is that many Kenyans who have been trained by Al-Shabaab have recently returned to Kenyan soil. If they are indeed responsible for these attacks, it is likely that Kenya will see even more violence in the near future.

The US recently issued a warning to its citizens regarding the possibility of such attacks, which indicates that the US may have access to very useful sources of information in this regard. While the direct involvement of the US would likely exacerbate the situation in Kenya, the two countries should consider sharing the information they have so future attacks can be prevented.

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