

## Al-Shabaab Attack on Westgate Mall in Kenya

On Saturday, Sept. 21, gunmen attacked Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya. After a four-day standoff, Kenyan officials indicated that the site of the attack was secured by armed forces on Tuesday evening, Sept. 24. Media sources report that Somali militant organization al-Shabaab has claimed responsibility for the attack, and that the attack has resulted in hundreds of casualties, including more than 60 deaths as of Sept. 25. START has developed this background report highlighting attacks attributed to al-Shabaab, terrorism in Kenya, and extended attacks involving hostages in barricade situations.

### AL-SHABAAB

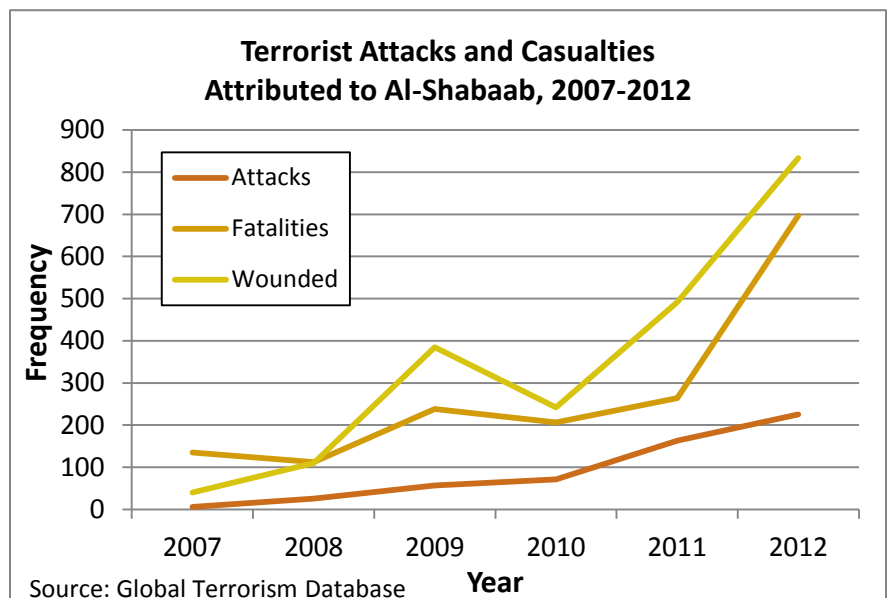
Since it splintered from the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) in 2007, **al-Shabaab has carried out nearly 550 terrorist attacks, killing more than 1,600 and wounding more than 2,100.** The number of attacks attributed to al-Shabaab has increased rapidly from less than 10 in 2007 to more than 200 in 2012.

The number of casualties caused by al-Shabaab increased at an even greater rate, however the lethality of the group's attacks (3.0 deaths per attack, on average) actually declined somewhat over time.

As al-Shabaab's activity increased in Somalia, the group also expanded its activity into Kenya in retaliation for Kenyan forces intervening in Somalia. **By 2012, almost one-quarter of the group's attacks (22.7%) took place throughout Kenya,** primarily in Garissa (13 attacks), Nairobi (8 attacks), Wajir (4 attacks), Mandera (4 attacks), and Ifo (4 attacks).

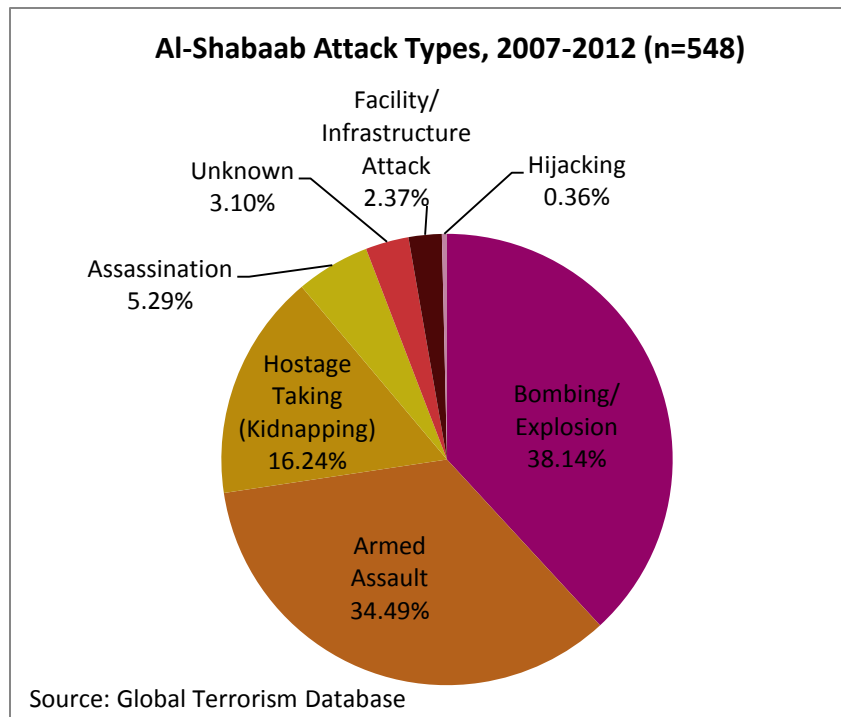
The targets of al-Shabaab attacks are quite varied, most frequently including private citizens and property (25.9%), military (22.4%), general government (13.9%), police (9.9%), businesses (5.1%), diplomatic entities (4.0%), and journalists and media (4.0%). In an effort to gain control of territory in Somalia, al-Shabaab has attacked military targets from various nations, including Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Turkey, and Uganda, as well as multinational AMISOM forces.

The group's most lethal attacks are often characterized by assaults on military targets leading to extended clashes, or mass-casualty bombings like that in 2010 that killed scores of civilians gathered to watch a World Cup soccer game in Kampala, Uganda. Thirty of al-Shabaab's 548 attacks between 2007 and 2012 were carried out by suicide bombers. These attacks killed 331 people, including the attackers.



Al-Shabaab's most commonly used tactics include bombings and armed assaults, which comprise 72.6 percent of their attacks.

Although the group is responsible for almost 90 kidnapping events between 2007 and 2012, it did not carry out any hostage-barricade attacks, like the one at Westgate mall, during this time period.



## TERRORISM IN KENYA

Between 1970 and 2012 there have been more than 250 terrorist attacks in Kenya. These attacks killed more than 1,000 and wounded more than 5,000 people. More than half of the terrorist attacks in Kenya were concentrated in six cities: Nairobi (61 attacks), Garissa (27 attacks), Mandera (19 attacks), Mombassa (12 attacks), Wajir (12 attacks), and Dadaab (11 attacks). The first terrorist attacks in Kenya recorded in the Global Terrorism Database took place in February, March, and April of 1975 when assailants from the Maskini Liberation Front bombed the Starlight Nightclub in Nairobi, a bus station in Nairobi, and the summer home of President Kenyatta in Mombasa.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s relatively few terrorist attacks took place in Kenya, however in 1992 a series of 30 attacks in the months leading up to Kenya's first multi-party elections killed more than 150 people in total. Terrorist violence spiked again in Kenya in advance of elections in 1997 and 2007. The 2002 elections, in contrast, were relatively peaceful.



Site of U.S. Embassy bombing in Nairobi, 8 August 1998.  
Photo credit: Dave Caulkin, Associated Press, via <http://www.washingtonpost.com>

The most lethal terrorist attack in Kenya occurred when al-Qa'ida targeted the United States Embassy in Nairobi in August, 1998. A suicide truck bomb killed more than 200 people, including 12 Americans, and wounded 4,000 others. This was part of a coordinated attack in which a similar device detonated almost simultaneously at the U.S. Embassy in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, killing 11 and wounding 85.

Although much of the terrorist violence in Kenya prior to 1998 had been carried out among local tribes or by activists in the context of national elections, the mass casualty embassy bombing in Nairobi was not the first or last case of a transnational terrorist organization targeting a foreign entity in Kenya.

In 1976, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) unsuccessfully attempted to attack an El Al flight landing in Nairobi with surface-to-air missiles. Suspected al-Qa'ida operatives attempted a similar attack 26 years later, in November 2002, firing missiles at an Israeli charter flight departing from Mombasa airport. This attempt was also unsuccessful; however on the same day al-Qa'ida was implicated in a second attack in Mombasa in which three suicide bombers killed ten Kenyans and three Israelis with a car bomb at the Paradise Hotel.

<b>Perpetrators of Terrorist Attacks in Kenya, 1975-2012</b>	<b>Attacks</b>	<b>Fatalities</b>	<b>Wounded</b>
Al-Qa'ida	3	240	4000
Al-Shabaab	93	121	492
Forum for the Restoration of Democracy-Kenya	2	1	0
God's Oppressed Army	2	0	0
Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK)	3	0	5
Kenya African National Union (KANU)	5	5	8
Kisii Activists	1	4	0
Maasai	1	3	4
Maskini Liberation Front	3	27	100
Merille Militia	3	6	4
Mombasa Republican Council (MRC)	3	4	5
Mungiki Sect	4	8	2
Mwakenya Dissident Movement	2	4	0
Nandi Tribe	4	0	32
National Development Party (NDP)	1	0	2
Oromo Liberation Front	2	143	1
Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)	3	15	85
Sabaot Land Defense Force (SLDF)	4	19	11
Sabaot Tribe	2	40	0
Sungu Sungu	1	5	0
Toposa and Dongiro Tribes	2	89	0
United Somali Congress	1	1	2
Unknown/Other	109	320	278
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>1055</b>	<b>5031</b>

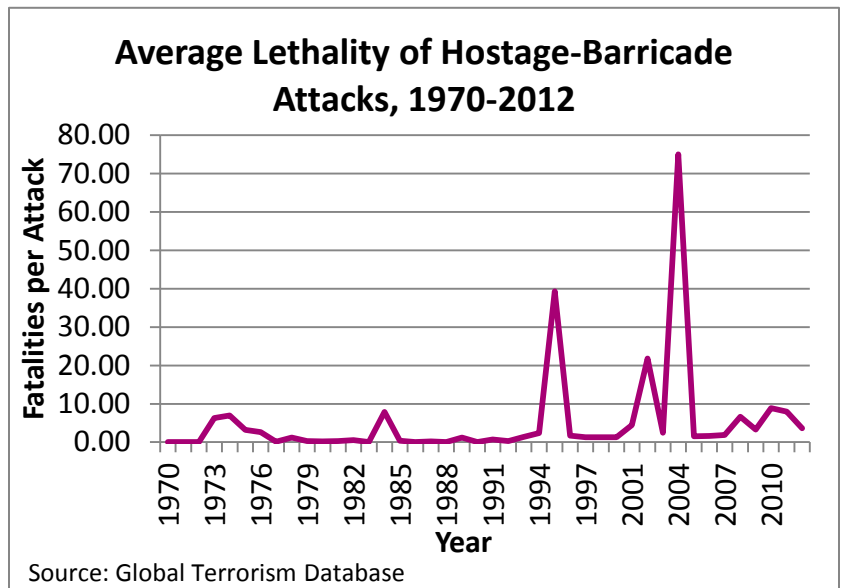
After the Paradise Hotel bombing, terrorism in Kenya remained fairly infrequent, with no more than two attacks per year until the 2007 general election when 12 attacks took place. In 2008, the landscape of perpetrators of terrorism in Kenya shifted once again, this time with a more lasting impact. In May 2008, the Somali group al-Shabaab targeted a police station in Wajir, freeing three detainees who were suspected of having links to al-Qa'ida.

Since then, al-Shabaab has been responsible for a rapid and substantial increase in terrorism in Kenya, having carried out nearly 100 attacks between 2008 and 2012, 65 percent of all attacks in Kenya during this time period.

**Between 2008 and 2012, 65 percent of all terrorist attacks in Kenya are attributed to al-Shabaab.**

To date, the attack at Westgate mall is al-Shabaab’s only recorded hostage-barricade attack, in which perpetrators occupy a location and hold hostages on site rather than abducting them. As we observed in Nairobi, perpetrators of these events often engage in a stand-off with security forces before the situation is resolved. Hostage-barricade attacks have occurred nearly 800 times worldwide between 1970 and 2012 and some have been highly lethal.

Historically, hostage-barricade tactics were commonly used by guerrilla organizations in Latin American countries like El Salvador, Colombia, Peru, Guatemala, Chile, and Nicaragua as a strategy to take control of radio stations and broadcast propaganda messages. The three perpetrator groups responsible for the most hostage-barricade attacks are Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) of El Salvador (55 attacks), Movement of April 19 (M-19) of Colombia (43 attacks), and Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) of Peru (37 attacks). These events often caused property damage but very few, if any, casualties. It was extremely rare that they lasted longer than 24 hours and in many cases the perpetrators left the location of the attack of their own accord.



Hostage-barricade attacks are still used by perpetrators as a tactic to send a message; they capture the attention of the government, the media, and international observers. However, more recent examples of hostage-barricade events from the 1990s and 2000s are substantively different from those in the 1970s and 1980s. For example, 43.3 percent of hostage-barricade attacks from the past two decades were extended incidents that spanned more than 24 hours, while only 5.5 percent of hostage-barricade attacks from the 1970s and 1980s crossed this threshold. An extended hostage-barricade attack is, on average, nearly five times as deadly as one that ends within 24 hours. Accordingly, the average lethality of these attacks has increased dramatically in recent years, driven in part by the occurrence of several attacks that resulted in hundreds of deaths.

**Since 1970, only five hostage-barricade attacks have killed more than 60 people.**

Despite an increase in extended, mass-casualty hostage-barricade attacks, events like the attack on Westgate mall in Nairobi remain relatively rare. Since 1970, only five hostage-barricade attacks have killed more than 60 people. For example, hostage-barricade attacks are a disproportionately common tactic among Chechen separatist perpetrators in

Russia. The most deadly single hostage-barricade attack between 1970 and 2012 took place in Beslan, Russia in 2004 when the Riyadus-Salikhin Reconnaissance and Sabotage Battalion of Chechen Martyrs held approximately 1,200 hostages in a school. By the conclusion of the siege three days later more than 300 adults and children were killed and more than 700 were injured. Chechen rebel groups carried out similar large scale hostage-barricade attacks in a Budyonnovsk hospital in 1995 and a Moscow theater in 2002. The former continued for six days, the latter lasted three days, and each attack killed more than 100 people.

In 2008, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) perpetrators carried out one of the most complex hostage-barricade terrorist attacks on record. In a series of assaults on seven different civilian targets in Mumbai, India, assailants killed a total of 171 people and wounded more than 250 over the course of three days. The fact that this event involved simultaneous attacks on multiple locations, including large-scale hostage situations at several hotels in the city, makes it extremely unique.

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#### ABOUT THIS REPORT

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The data presented here are drawn from START's Global Terrorism Database (GTD) and reports from news media. The GTD contains information on more than 104,000 terrorist incidents that have occurred around the world since 1970. For more information about the GTD, visit [www.start.umd.edu/gtd](http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd).



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